



LISTEN TO THE COUNTRY

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S. P. B. MAIS

S. P. B. MAIS

*has also written*

RAVEN AMONG THE ROOKS  
A CHRONICLE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
THESE I HAVE LOVED  
THE THREE-COLOURED PENCIL  
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE  
BRITAIN CALLING  
ENGLAND'S CHARACTER  
ENGLAND'S PLEASANCE  
THIS UNKNOWN ISLAND  
A MODERN COLUMBUS  
LIGHT OVER LUNDY  
OLD KING COAL  
Etc.

S . P . B . M A I S

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LISTEN TO  
THE COUNTRY

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from photographs taken  
by the Author

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L O N D O N



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## D E D I C A T I O N

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With fondest love  
to  
JILL  
Who first taught me  
to loiter  
and  
Listen to the country

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## THE ISLAND

(i)

*Lundy*

FROM MY BEDROOM WINDOW IN MY GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE I used as a child to look out over the bay to the lights of the island some twenty miles away.

The light on the south side was called fixed, but it dwindled and expanded oddly. I preferred the regularity with which the revolving light from the north lighthouse gave out its splendid two long flashes succeeded by an interval of total darkness which I used to count and always counted wrong.

Long before I knew that the Welsh name for it was "Caer Sidi", the Stronghold of the Fairies, I knew the island to be magic by the way it wandered about in the sea as I walked the mainland cliffs—it was never where I expected it to be—by the way it disappeared altogether for days at a time, and by the way it turned into a golden rod at sunset.

My grandfather always foretold the weather by it.

If it stood up high and clear it was a sign of coming rain. If it looked low and dim it was a sign of fair weather.

I have always been a close observer of clouds and sky portents, and so often were the island signs wrong that I early came to the conclusion that this was just another example of the fairies' mischievous habit of pixy-leading gullible man.

Summer visitors to our coast, recking little of fairies, took the island in their stride, but those who lived on the mainland facing it seldom, if ever, visited it. We knew its every mood from twenty miles away. In a way, we feared it.

I always had a secret longing to explore its mysteries, and drew countless maps of what I imagined it to look like from the deceptive evidence of my grandfather's telescope, and later of my own field-glasses.

Curiously enough, my grandfather was always going over to the island, but he used to go by the *Gannet* sailing-ship from Instow, a hazardous journey which took anything from five to ten hours.

I had very early in life been frightened of the sea as the result of battling through a terrific storm in a collier, and it so happened that I never screwed up courage enough to visit the island until I had crossed the Atlantic twice and sailed to all the other islands round the coast of Britain. I left my island till last.

In point of fact I should probably never have gone had I not been spurred on—bullied is probably the more accurate term—by my seven-year-old daughter Lalage, who, never having set foot aboard craft of any kind, naturally regarded the island as an adventure of which no decent parent should cheat her. She had, wisely, I think, never been warned about seasickness.

We decided to go in a huge party on a Monday. All the other children in the house were leaving for home on the Wednesday, so with them it was a case of then or never.

The omens on Sunday night were bad, and we woke on Monday morning to a day of rain, when sky and sea were indistinguishable.

The water looked calm, but the day was depressing. I called it off. I suspected a ground swell and continuous rain.

We saw the others off and I envied them not at all. They returned some eleven hours later, wet to the skin, blue with cold, sick, and extremely miserable.

I felt justified of my betrayal.

But day in day out after that I had to submit to an unceasing fusillade from my seven-year-old daughter.

"Promise," she would say; "promise that we shall go on the first fine day."

She has a pathetic faith in promises.

In the end I had to yield to her importunity.

There was a choice of ways.

We could fly—but fifteen shillings for fifteen minutes struck me as expensive.

We could take the seventy-ton *Lerina*, the mail motor-boat, but everyone was vague about her sailings.

The steamer was the cheapest and most obvious route, but even the steamer provided a variety of ways.

If you went for an all-day excursion you called at Clovelly and made a triangular journey of it, whereas if you went for half a day you crossed to the island direct.

I chose the latter way because it gave the day a chance of showing its hand and settling down to fair or foul before we started.

This particular day was fine enough even for my apprehensive mind.

There were not enough waves for surfing. The gulls were enjoying a rest on the surface of the water. The smallest children were able to swim in their rings.

As I bathed in the morning in the still, clear warm water I could scarcely believe that after more than fifty years I was actually going to Lundy at last.

We lunched at twelve o'clock. At one o'clock we set

off for the bus, I completely equipped for a long sea-voyage with a flask of brandy, a bag of barley-sugar, Leica camera with two refills, field-glasses, Scots rug, deer-stalker, winter underclothes, fisherman's jersey, and sheepskin-lined cowboy's coat. I had, in addition, note-book, maps, guides, and a mechanical toy for Lalage to play with.

I am impervious to the laughter of the lightly clad, but I was fully aware of the contrast that I offered to the girl who stood beside me in the queue on the pier. She had on a pair of sandals, very abbreviated skirts, and a thin shirt. Her clothes may have weighed three ounces. Mine felt in the heat and crush of the queue as if they weighed about three hundredweights. I felt a fool, but I knew just how cold that girl was going to feel once we sailed and for the greater part of the day. I comforted myself with clichés about those who laugh last.

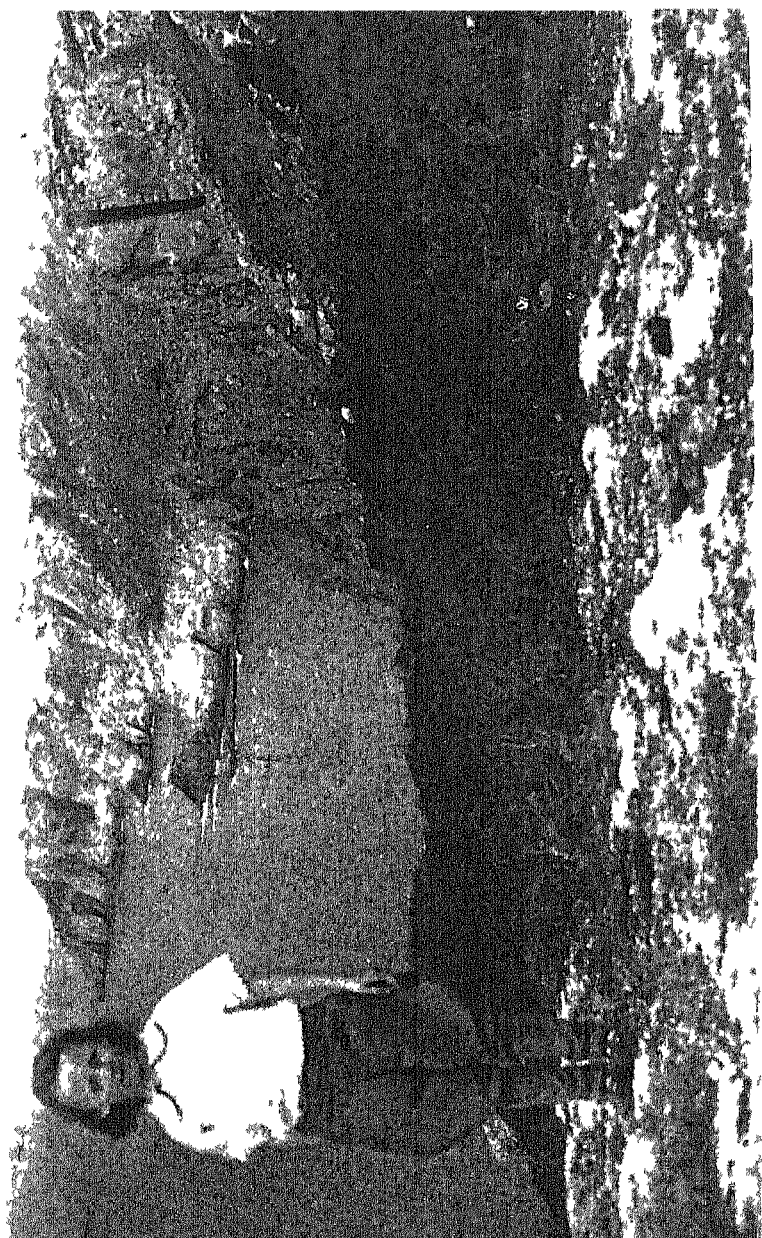
Once aboard we made for the upper deck, "extra charge for single journey, 1s." It was already very full, but by dint of seizing deck-chairs and jamming them between the legs of scowling elders I made room for Lalage and Lalage's mother.

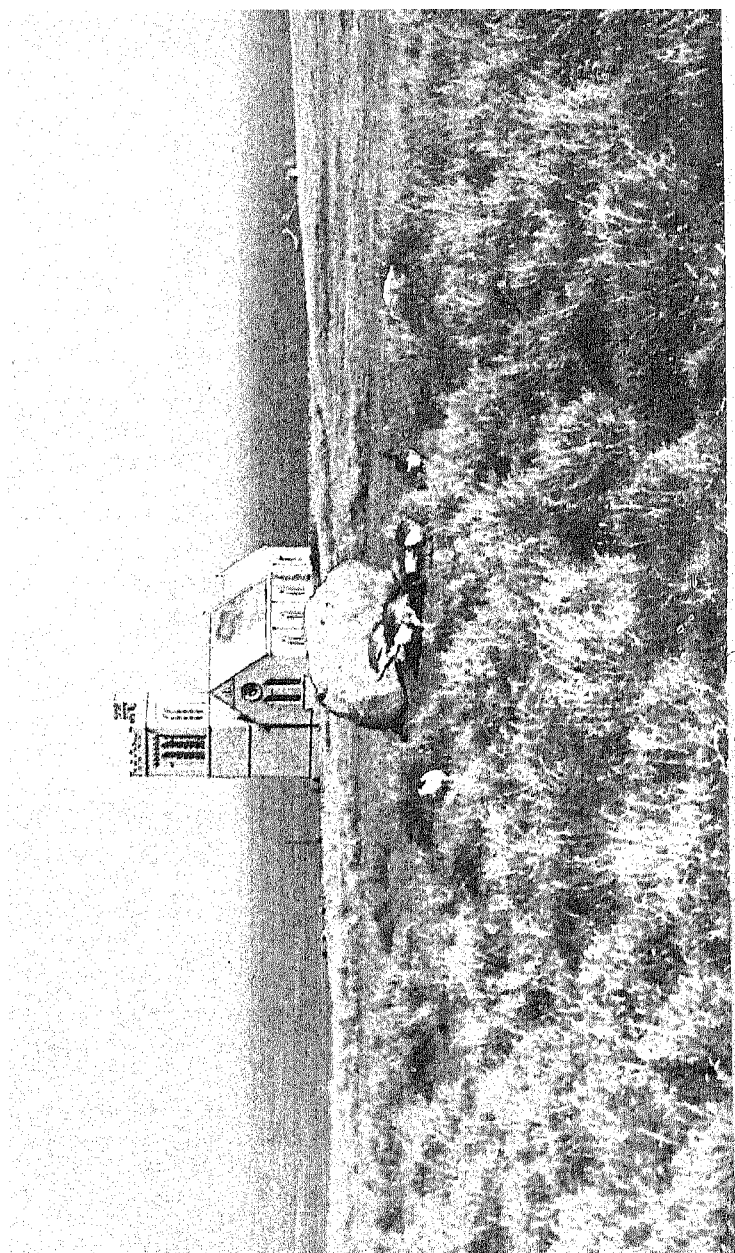
As soon as we cleared the harbour we ran into the wind that had given no indication of its presence ashore. There was motion, but Lalage was too much interested by the novelty to notice it.

After looking at the wide expanse of water in front and at the receding rocks of the mainland, I settled down to talk to my neighbour, who appeared to know the island well.

"I escape to it," he said, "whenever I can get away. I've been there four times already this year. I live in the old Keep, and spend my time walking and watching the birds. I've been there every year for fourteen years, and I've still heaps of things to find out about it. It seems

*"Can't We Go Down and See?" Lalage in Lundy*





silly, doesn't it, when you think that the whole island only occupies just over a thousand acres?"

He lent me a little handbook to the island, and I once more refreshed my memory with facts that I had known and turned over and refurbished all my life.

I had known the island so long that what with the fancies and embellishments with which I had furnished it I was incapable of separating fact from legend.

My own family have lived in this part of the mainland since Saxon times, so I was much less impressed by the story of the Norman castle than I was by that of the long succession of pirates who annexed it.

Some said that the Turks once held it.

The two stories that I liked best were these :

In William and Mary's reign a French frigate flying the Dutch colours hove to below the impregnable cliffs and signalled peaceful signs to the watchful inhabitants. They asked for milk for their dying captain. It was granted. A few days later they made another request.

Their captain, they said, had died, and they wished to bring him ashore in his coffin and bury him with full religious rites.

The inhabitants' suspicions were lulled by this reasonable request, so the funeral party came ashore, and when they were left to themselves in the church they opened the coffin, withdrew from it cutlasses and guns, and proceeded to massacre the islanders, hamstringing their cattle, and destroy everything before taking their leave.

Some fifty years later, in 1748, the island was leased to Thomas Benson, Member of Parliament for Barnstaple, a member of an old Bideford family.

He contracted with the Government to export convicts to Virginia, but having taken the money he also took the

B

*St. Helen's Church, Lundy*



convicts, landed them in Lundy, and compelled them to work his quarries and build his walls. These walls still stand.

Every night he imprisoned them in Marisco Castle while he and his men lived just below.

He then turned his hand to smuggling contraband and scuttling ships, after insuring their cargo in order to claim insurance.

When his double-dealing was discovered he fled to Portugal.

When I was a boy the island was owned by a parson called Heaven, and now it belongs to a bird-lover who has made the island a sanctuary for all wild life.

He mints his own coins, two in number, called a puffin and a half-puffin, and prints his own stamps to the number of five, a half-puffin salmon pink, a light blue puffin, a mauve six puffin, a light brown nine puffin, and a light green twelve puffin, each bearing the name of the island, and drawings of as many puffins as the stamp indicates.

There is also a halfpenny Air Mail stamp showing an aeroplane above the island, which looks in the picture less like an oak-leaf than it does in reality.

I was roused from my guide-book by a tap on the sleeve by one of the crew.

"If you want to see anything of the island," he said, "you'd better go down now and join the queue for an early boat, otherwise all you'll see of the island will be from the deck of the ship."

I looked at my watch. We were not due to reach the island for half an hour. I badly wanted to see the rocky cliffs along which we should be passing during that half-hour.

But I obeyed the advice and joined the already hotly pressed queue below, where there was nothing to see beyond

the heads of other queuers, and no air except that tainted by the smokers.

A very long half-hour passed, during which I repented a dozen times of my action and glanced apprehensively at Lalage to see how the pressure was reacting on her. She seemed not to notice it. Her attention was riveted on a water-tap just above her head.

At long last the ship's bell rang. We slowed down, we stopped ; two motor-boats came alongside. Tickets were collected as we were passed by the officers into the boats. Landing-tickets were collected by a man in fishing-waders as we were beached.

We landed. We were actually in the island. After over fifty years of longing I was standing on this magic beach.

I noticed very little at first except that the water was suddenly deep and very blue, that a wrecked ship bearing the letters *Ilomena* stuck half out of the water at the end of the rock called Lametry, that the beach was full of boulders, that one horse stood patiently waiting to pull in the landing-stage, and that a rough diagonal track led steeply up the cliff side some four hundred feet to the top of the island.

A white stone marked "T.H. Landing Place, 1819" stood above a shed that smelt evilly of fish.

"T.H." presumably means Trinity House.

I climbed above the sheltered bay where three hundred ships have ridden at anchor at once, to a little combe, where I saw tucked away in a garden with a gay riot of hydrangeas a stucco-covered square house called Millcombe.

It was, to my surprise, embowered among oaks. I had not expected to find trees in my rocky island. There were very few others, one tall pine rising above the beach and

some stunted wind-swept oaks in anothercombe that I encountered later.

Above Millcombe I came to a large, modern, uninspired-looking church. No services are, I believe, held there. As the entire population of the island is only twenty this large parish church looks singularly out of place.

Close by stands the grey island hotel with a tavern attached, where you may drink beer at any hour of the day or night unmolested by licensing laws, buy stamps, coins, picture postcards, and, rather surprisingly, at sixpence each, the eggs of birds frequenting the island.

There was a peacock strutting on the wall.

I suspected that the great majority of my fellow passengers would sink into that tavern bar on climbing the hill and see no more of the island than that, or the interior of the ugly corrugated iron tea-house opposite.

I was for the island. I marched over a gorse common towards a deserted lighthouse that stood eighty feet above the top of the island, itself five hundred feet above the sea.

It is no longer used because the summit of the island is liable to fogs that obscured the light altogether. But it can be climbed for twopence.

The two present lighthouses stand very little above sea level.

I ran over to the western edge and lay well content above some rocks that had been harassed by hundreds of thousands of years of Atlantic buffetings.

I took out my tea-basket, and before I had begun to look round the ship's hooter sounded from far below.

"Half an hour," said one of our party.

"But I've not seen anything," I said.

"That's the way of it. You've got to stay the night if you want to see it," said someone else.

"Let's stay," said Lalage twenty times, quickly.

After a score of "We can't," I compromised.

"We'll come again tomorrow," I said.

With that sop she was content to retrace her steps over the rough field, past the grazing sheep, past the geese on the common and the church whose clock still stood at exactly eleven o'clock, and so down the steep cliff path to the beach, where stood a long and patient queue waiting to be taken aboard.

We needn't have hurried.

There were a few visitors bathing from the pebbly beach. There was a large cave that I started to explore, but I was recalled to catch the last boat off.

We got under weigh, climbed to our upper deck, and looked back at the famous Shutter Rock where Amyas Leigh saw the great Spanish galleon go to her doom and, centuries later, H.M.S. *Montagu* piled up. Then it was heigh-ho! for the white lighthouse on the mainland at the point known to Ptolemy as the Pillars of Hercules.

Instead of being seasick Lalage evinced a desire for meat.

"Meat," she said. "I want meat."

In the over-heated saloon she ate two large platefuls of silverside with sweet pickles and beetroot.

She then had a big helping of fruit salad.

The sea seemed to agree with her.

The next day was again calm. The sun was even warmer. I was desperately afraid of risking an anti-climax after a success.

This time Lalage had no children to play with, but I encountered a colleague of my Fleet Street days who had never before visited the island, and I was only too willing to act the role of "old salt".

We played with the toy motor-car until Clovelly, where we watched more passengers embark from small boats, and then went downstairs to another meat meal.

Unfortunately the "race" round the south side of the island combined with the heavy meal to make Lalage suffer her first qualms.

She forgot them in her anxiety to be once more first off the ship.

As soon as we landed, we raced up the steep path, past the hotel, and made a bee-line for the north end of the island three miles away. We had no chance of reaching it, but we hoped at any rate to wrest something of her secret from her.

We first came upon a man "carrying" a six-acre field of oats, the only arable field in the island. It lay just beyond the farm buildings where the labourers live. Our way lay along a high wall built by Benson's convicts. On our left was the rough grass landing-field of the aeroplanes, with two horses on one side of the wall and a very lusty bull on the other.

A gate opened out into a marshy, peaty common where wild ponies cavorted. Our way was now indicated by great blocks of granite known as Tebbitt's Stones, planted at intervals of a hundred yards.

I only passed one woman, and when I asked her the way she replied, as I expected: "Sorry, I'm a stranger here."

On the western cliffs we could see a line of telegraph posts. On the eastern cliffs ahead we sighted a sort of look-out station, where I saw a girl in pyjamas coming down a ladder and a bare-chested boy in shorts sunbathing in the garden.

Then, quite without warning, I was looking across a

great chasm at the most satisfying natural sculpture of a man that I have ever seen.

It was called the Templar Rock, and bore a very striking resemblance to one of those Knights Templars who in the Middle Ages were lords of the island, but never took possession.

Beyond the look-out house I looked northward over an arid waste of moorland, with a duck-pond in the heather and bracken to a much more arid plateau of bare rock with still the line of stones to guide us.

We ran onward, knowing that we had no time to reach the ruins far ahead marked on the map as "John o' Groats", but determined to get some way farther.

Then, suddenly, on the western rocks I saw a herd of wild-goats peeping at me. I ran over the heather. They disappeared round a rock, leaving one horned bearded elder to keep watch.

I chased those goats to the Devil's Slide, where they stood precariously on a long stone toboggan-run which ended precipitously in the Atlantic ocean.

I flung down my tea-basket, gulped quickly one cup and had to turn to run to catch the boat.

That, I think, was the island's best moment for me.

Lalage looked out over the Goat Rock.

"Is that America?" she asked, looking out over the western waste of waters.

I nodded.

America was the nearest land that way.

There was complete silence above and around, except for the "craaking" of a pair of ravens.

It was indeed a sanctuary for all wild things. Only the goats were shy. The ponies came whinnying up to greet us on our homeward way.

We decided that we would come back and reach the north end of the island even if it killed us.

It was some days before there was another excursion, and the day when it did come was gloomy, if quiet. The weather report was "Fair and warmer". It was much less fair and much colder, and the boat much less steady.

It was lucky that I had thought of a pack of cards, indeed two packs, for a continuous sequence of games of "Rummy" kept Lalage's thoughts away from the shaky boat and turbulent sea.

On our first visit the island had been smiling and inviting from the start. On our second trip it was completely invisible until we were almost in the bay.

On our third trip it loomed up black, sinister, solitary and forbidding all the time. It warned us off from the start.

A miscalculation in buses caused us nearly to miss the boat. I felt uncomfortable about the whole business. It was going to be a physically exhausting effort to get Lalage to cover the seven miles of walking the island in the time.

Anyway, we were in the first boat to land, and made ourselves feel sick running up the steep path from the beach. Past the hotel we turned over the flying-ground to the western coast to follow the telegraph wires. This track led us past three lines of walls, known as Quarter Way, Half Way and Three-Quarter Way Walls, past an awe-inspiring cataclysm of great rocks known as Earthquake, and more pinnacles of rocks known as the Cheeses, past the Devil's Chimney and the Devil's Slide where we had seen the wild goats, and then I lost my map.

As you have gathered, I travel heavily laden.

But taking notes as you walk at high speed, carrying

trousers (I was wearing shorts), jersey, field-glasses, luncheon-basket, camera, novel, and note-book is no easy matter, and the map just slipped down. I ran back for it and found it, blessed the fairies of the island, but must have used the wrong words, for half an hour later I lost it again, and this time finally.

But I saw a proud gannet, I saw many ridiculous puffins, I saw none of the wild deer, but I did get to the north end lighthouse exactly as the aeroplane zoomed past on its way to turn for the mainland.

At my feet I saw a myriad tiny wild flowers, mainly yellow. I saw granite covered with delicate green lichen and warm golden lichen.

I saw gorse yellower than I have ever seen it anywhere else, and in the end I did achieve my great ambition. I had walked the whole length of the island, and so had my seven-year-old child.

The last mile is over a real Abomination of Desolation.

Only the walls of John o' Groats little stone cottage make a diversion in the rocky plateau.

But the view was as wide as man could wish. I could see all the mountain ranges of South Wales, the moors of Devon and the black cliffs of North Cornwall.

Lalage was angry because she could not see America, but she could see the first signs of the Atlantic depression that was to fall on us in the night.

We looked down the steep steps beyond the lighthouse to the dangerous reef known as the Hen and Chickens. We looked at the taut line that ran down from the cliff top to the rock in the sea. I explained to Lalage the meaning of "breeches-buoy".

"They seem to do nothing but have wrecks here," she said. "Is there any treasure?"



"The caves are crammed with it," I replied. "Ivory and peacocks and pieces of eight . . . At least, I always used to think so."

"Can't we go down and see?" she urged.

It was as much as I dare do to peer over the precipitous sides.

"When men were braver they got down somehow, somewhere," I said; "but today the only path I know is down to the Landing Beach. It's what is called an impregnable island."

I looked at my watch.

"Golly!" I said. "If we're to catch the boat we've got to run."

"You promised that I could climb the lighthouse, Daddy," she pleaded.

"Then we've got to run twice as fast."

So twice as fast we ran along the stone-marked track towards the lighthouse.

I was annoyed at missing the Gannet Rock, and peeping over at unnamed coves, and picking some of those exquisite-coloured little flowers that strewed my path.

But Lalage had collected large and heavy chunks of the island granite for each of the maids and her Nanny.

They loaded her down, but she ran valiantly through brambles and gorse-bushes and reached her lighthouse, not, however, before the ship had twice sounded her warning hooter.

The stone steps made me giddy, but the view from the top was tremendous.

We ran down to the beach and caught what we imagined to be the last boat with a minute to spare.

Quarter of an hour later, when we were looking back at the island from the upper deck wondering why the steamer

failed to sail, we heard cries from the top of the cliffs above. A man and a girl hailed us.

The landing-stage had to be put back, a boat hailed, the steamer turned about, and when the peccant couple came aboard they came wreathed in smiles as if they had achieved something heroic.

With that extra quarter of an hour I could have seen all that I had missed.

The island looked blacker and more menacing as we left it, and all the way home it looked moody and morose. Perhaps it hates its conquerors.

(ii)

*Burgh Island*

I have crossed the water to many hundreds of islands, some of them islands of enchantment, all of them islands of interest, but in none of them did I find felicity, by which I mean unsullied content, in such full measure as in Burgh Island. And here are my reasons.

It is small, but not too small. To be precise, it is thirty acres. It is small enough to contain no roads, so there is no danger of being run over.

A respite on holiday from the noise as well as the bustle and smell of traffic is a boon indeed.

And the freedom from dust gives an unusual sense of freshness. It is large enough to make a voyage round it in a rowing-boat a wild adventure, the climbing of its cliffs as hazardous as you care to make it, and bathing in its many coves a source of infinite delight.

It is accessible, but not too accessible.

It is the only island that I have ever reached by tractor. Contact with the mainland does not depend on wind or water. It can be reached in all weathers, and at nearly all stages of the tide. This is an enormous advantage to those of us who cannot afford to be marooned for days in bad weather. At low water a broad strip of unusually golden sand connects the island with Bigbury, and from this strip you have the unusual choice of bathing in a western or an eastern sea. But twice a day this sand is covered to a depth considerable enough to make us island-dwellers infinitely happy in our isolation.

Isolation may sound to you an absurd term in this connection, and indeed it is difficult to believe that a mere five hundred-yard gulf of sand submerged to a depth of a few feet can provide such a perfect illusion of separation.

But every true island is an island of illusion. And the particular illusion of Burgh Island is that it is still as much the haunt of smugglers and pirates as it is of seagulls, cormorants and jackdaws.

As you cross the shallow gulf on the high tractor your thoughts may well be on the world that you are leaving behind, but quite surely as soon as you land on the island soil you become a different person.

Things seen as well as things unseen contribute to this sea-change in you.

First there is the white dazzling sea-wall and, behind it, strange giant shapes of ancient figureheads from the bows of old sailing-ships. These, in the dusk, make you rub your eyes, but you rub your eyes at any time of the day when you catch sight of the inn sign swinging in the wind, for this bears the inscription "Pilchard Inn 1395". 1395, not 1935. There may be older inns on the mainland of

England, but I have not seen them, there is certainly none that gives a deeper impression of genuine antiquity.

In the inn parlour, which has thick stone walls and benches and settles polished by generations of fishermen, I found Jack, Sid, and Jim, three blue-jerseyed curly-headed friendly islanders, whose talk was as rich as the cream they eat. They were born in this inn and their fathers before them for seven hundred years, and the fishing-rights of part of the island remain with them until their deaths.

Jack showed me the rough profile of a hook-nosed, broad-chinned smuggler cut in the rough stone of one side of the fireplace, and on the other side I saw the profile of the Preventive Officer who kept watch on this smuggler's activities.

But I was shown far greater wonders than these. These fishermen unfurled for me what I was assured is the only genuine pirate flag in existence. It is oatmeal colour, and as delicate as the fairy flag of Dunvegan, and though the design of the skull and crossbones is getting faint, the motto *Mors Vincit* is still plain. Its date is probably 1800. Among other treasures of the inn I coveted most a long sinister-looking pirate's sword, the haft of which was appropriately made in the likeness of a skull and crossbones. No fitter place for a repository of these reminders of the island's grim history could be imagined.

But visitors to the island do not stay at the "Pilchard Inn". It is just a port of call for the *apéritif*, an admirable prologue to the swelling act.

Above it stands the new white castle-like hotel which, in spite of its modernity, not only blends with the island atmosphere but actually enhances its mystery. For there is one mystery about this hotel that completely baffles me. I am accustomed to islands, and I expect if not actually to

rough it, at any rate to live simply. Transport difficulties are apt to make even reasonable delicacies unobtainable. But in the Burgh Island Hotel I fed as I have seldom fed in any hotel on the mainland. The chef is not only a master of the art of making dishes appetizing—he has the most fertile brain I have yet encountered among chefs. He did not repeat a success once during the whole of my stay, and each dish that I tasted was a success.

I am rather averse from recommending this island to gourmets, for the connoisseur of nectar is seldom also a lover of solitude, and I dislike the possibility of my quiet island being converted into a lotus-land for the disciples of Lucullus, but in fairness to the hotel I cannot hide this surprising fact for which I was totally unprepared.

But this I would implore you to do. Go to Burgh Island, if you must, for your stomach's sake, but for your soul's sake sit between meals as the gorged cormorants sit, in silent wonder on the rock edges drinking in the beauty that lies all round. For to me Burgh Island's main enchantment is not the comfort of its beds, nor even the variety and excellence of its table, but the rich colours of its flower-besprinkled cliffs and bird-haunted coves.

It is indeed difficult to make a complete tour of the island in a single day. There are so many places where you must just linger a little longer and watch the mother seagull standing over her young, the jackdaws' swooping flight, and the cormorants skimming over the surface of the sea.

There is the deep "Swallow" bathing-pool with the arched hole where the famous smuggler Tom Crocker hid his loot. There is Broadie Cove with a high peninsula of rock separating it from Jacob's Ladder Cove with its seventy-five steep steps descended by ship's ladder, where the water

is of the purest aquamarine. There is the cove "for rock climbers only" which leads to the narrow straits that cut us off from the high rock of the Little Island. There is Galleon Cave with its reminders of Armada, and wherever you turn the cliffs change colour from rich red to shining silver, some gold-dusty with lichen, others hidden under the pink sea-thrift, while on the summit of the island, some two hundred feet up, there stands the ruins of the ancient chapel of St. Michael, where I used to stand at midnight and look out far over the western sea for the flash of Eddystone Lighthouse. At such a moment the sense of isolation was complete. The island seemed less an island than a ship becalmed under the stars in mid-Pacific.

The illusion is strengthened on returning to the hotel in the moonlight, for the lounge is really the stern of the top deck of H.M.S. *Ganges*. There are ships' lights hanging everywhere, and the whole atmosphere is of the open sea. In fact, if you don't like the luxury of the hotel there's a Government pinnace, the *Jolly Roger*, moored up on the rocks with half a dozen bunks for the hardy.

But it is most unusual in mid-ocean to do more than babble of green fields, much as you may sigh for them. At Burgh Island greens are within a few minutes' walk. You can knock a golf ball about in the island or you can play the game itself on the hotel links 350 feet up on the mainland on a grand stretch of smooth country overlooking the estuary of the river Avon. Or, if you prefer it, you may slip over to the mainland and walk for miles over the lovely sea cliffs and see how magical the island looks from across the water.

In fact this is one of the few places in the world where you can both have your cake and eat it. You get all the delight of being at sea without any of its discomforts.

Like the sea-birds, you can fly over to mingle with the workaday world when you feel like it, but you can also fly back when you feel like it to your noiseless, dustless island sanctuary.

"The sea," says Mr. Tomlinson, "is at its best at London, near midnight, when you are within the arms of a capacious chair, before a glowing fire, selecting phases of the voyage you will never make." I have a great admiration for the author of *The Sea and the Jungle*, but he is wrong there. The sea is at its best in Burgh Island.

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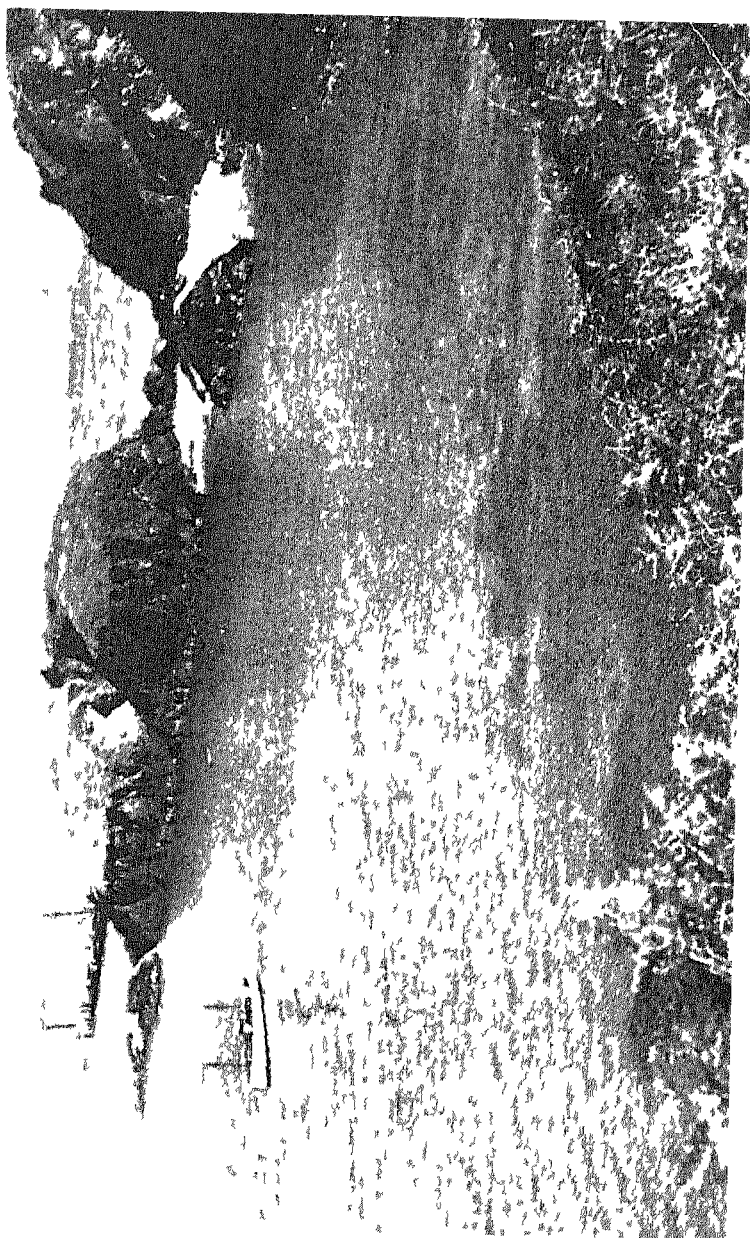
*The Isle of Wight*

The Isle of Wight has four outstanding points of attraction. It is an island, and all Englishmen scent romance in an island. It heads the list of English holiday resorts for sunshine, and mad dogs and Englishmen have, as Mr. Noel Coward reminded us, a penchant for being out in the midday sun.

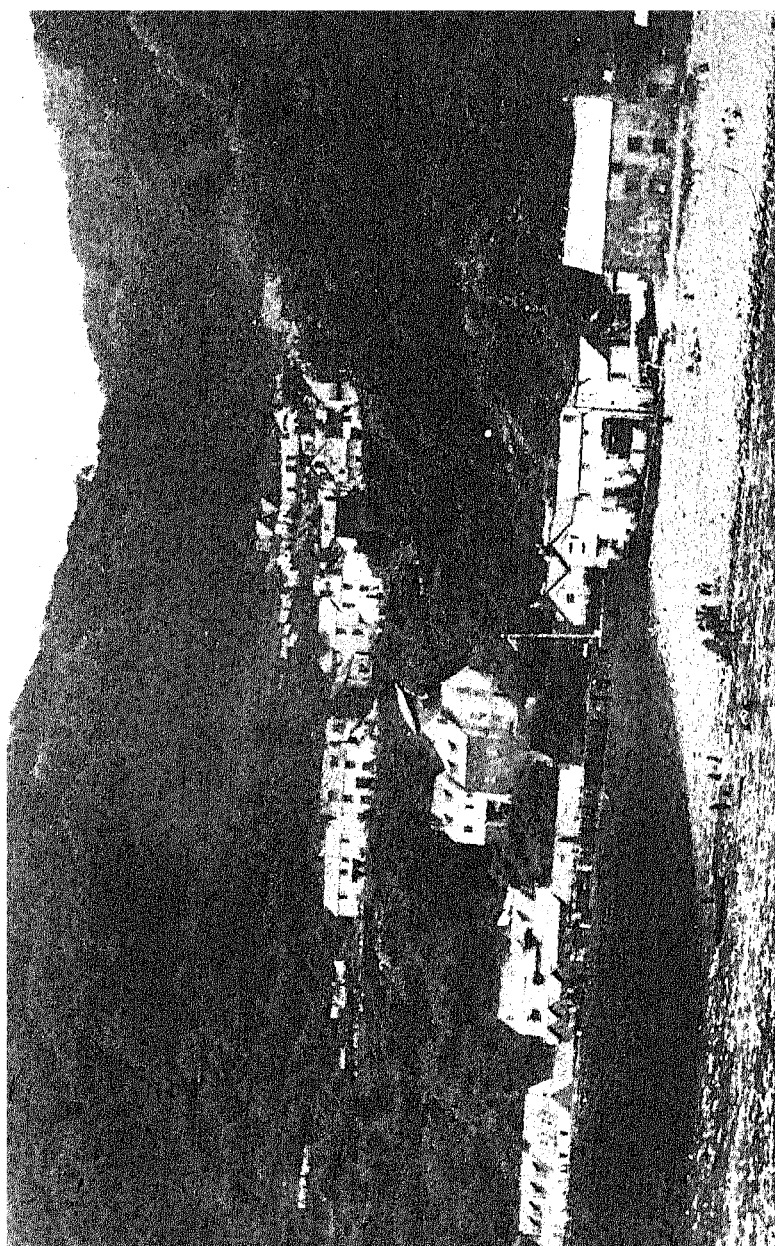
It is, unlike most islands, accessible in all weathers from the mainland without any risk of sea-sickness. And finally, it is compact of beauty. Walk where you will, drive where you will, the variety of colour, the changing contours, the picturesque neatness of the villages, cannot fail to fill you with delight. Indeed, the island is full of surprises. It is surprising to find a railway. It is surprising to find such an intricate maze of good roads.

The island is but twenty-four miles long and less than fourteen miles wide at its longest and widest, so it is easily possible to walk across its high chalk downland spine, with

*Rat Island, Lundy*







grand vistas of the sea on all sides, in a single day, just as it is easily possible to drive all round its coast in a single afternoon. But the wise traveller will no more be content with such a scamped impression than he would be just to see it from an aeroplane six thousand feet up or from the decks of the *Queen Mary* six thousand feet out in the Solent.

A car is a great asset in the Isle of Wight ; not for speeding, but to "go places". And how enchantingly different are the places to which we are lured. In high summer there are the sands and blue water of Seaview, where Society relaxes after the strenuous days of the thrilling week at Cowes.

There is the picturesque and totally unexpected ramification of Brading Harbour, and the seclusion of Bembridge Beach or Culver Cliff, whence you look out over the Channel with its busy traffic of grey destroyers, mammoth liners, graceful white-sailed windjammers and stolid colliers, *churning up the white foam on their lawful occasions*. And just over the flats come that trio of famous resorts, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor, each vying with the other to give its patrons just that admixture of crowded gaiety that makes for the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Shanklin seems to have made the best of both worlds, for the place is modern and hilarious and ancient and picturesque. Indeed, there is nothing in all the world quite like that cool, fern-fringed, green ravine of Shanklin Chine, which tempts even those who dislike ever getting out of a car to climb down to the inmost recesses of this enchanting glade. And, by way of complete contrast, at Ventnor there is the equally enchanting climb over St. Boniface Down to look over the cliffs into the clean blue water.

After Ventnor comes one of England's most lovely drives. It is a curious phenomenon that all man's attempts

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to improve on Nature by formal gardens are completely eclipsed by Nature herself when she is most careless. By far the most arresting scene in the Isle of Wight is the result of a landslide, where the cliffs have crumpled away, and slipped down anyhow, causing havoc and ruin. Below there has grown a most luxuriant, almost tropical, jungle of loveliness, which has become the most sought-after corner of the island.

All the way along the famous Undercliff Drive that runs from Ventnor to St. Lawrence and beyond it to St. Catherine's Point, your path is garlanded with trees through which you look up to layer upon layer of bare rock, and down to gorgeous glimpses of trees and orchards apparently suspended in mid-air above the silver sea.

After miles of winding in and out along the edge of this road, which also at times seems suspended in mid-air halfway up the high rocks, we come out into open country with the villages Shorwell, Brighstone, Mottistone, and Brook that by some miracle remain untouched by time and quite unspoiled by the adoration of the multitude.

From now on there is the spaciousness of smooth, green, chalk downs, and long before we reach Freshwater we feel the pure clean air that fits so exactly the poetic spirit of Tennyson, whose home this was. Great poetry is not inspired by accident. If you are a lover of Tennyson you will share the source of his inspiration on the downs that now remain for ever linked with his name. If you are a lover of these downs you can scarcely fail to become a lover of Tennyson.

The Needles, those dangerous scintillating razor-edges of chalk cliffs, lie just ahead. We are at the western extremity of the island, and just around the corner northward lies a sight so strange that we rub our eyes for very

wonder. The Needles are pure white. The cliffs above Alum Bay contain every colour under the sun: red, gold, black, silver, blue, green, and purple of every shade. Here, if anywhere in the world, are we enchanted into an interest in geological formations.

The colour does not stop with these shifting sands. We look across a narrow neck of water to the many-hued greens of the New Forest, the golden sands of Bournemouth, and the myriad-coloured cliffs of Dorset far away on the horizon. And so we come down from the high ground into the marsh-land of the Yar, and at Yarmouth make contact with one of the old island harbours.

The next creek, at Newtown, is even stranger, for here nothing is left of its ancient glory but a picturesque gabled town hall of brick and stone, now the property of the National Trust, and the sign of a seal in blue, showing a galley with a lion amidships, over the door of a farm that was once an inn. But the field-paths that lead down to the sea still have street names. One is Gold Street, and the great Duke of Marlborough was once Member of Parliament for this tiny hamlet which now boasts more pheasants than people. A thousand years ago it was burned by the Danes, and seven hundred years ago by the French, but today there is nothing for any enemy to drop a bomb on. It simply isn't there.

Cowes, on the other hand, at the mouth of the next river, the Medina, is very much there. There are very few sights in the world to compare with tall yachts under full sail, and it is with no small delight, after the stifling and overcrowded round of engagements of the London season, that lucky people don the jaunty cap and cool gear of the yachtsman and give themselves up to the magnificent sport of racing under sail.

But of all the Island's creeks I give the palm to the next one that separates Cowes from Ryde. Wootton Creek winds its way down a tree-fringed shore to culminate in one of the most amazingly beautiful and completely unspoilt villages in England. Fishbourne has everything. It stands embowered among trees ; there are actually oaks on its tiny promenade. Its houses are built in a circle, enclosing an exquisite green about the size of a gargantuan penny, and here grows a tree wreathed about with roses. And from Fishbourne to Ryde the path seems to be strewn with roses, for every house we pass is festooned with them. So much for the circular drive. With this most visitors are content. It is a great mistake.

Now make for Newport, standing snugly at the foot of fold upon fold of the downs. A little above it stands the ancient and lovely castle of Carisbrooke, where Charles I spent the last year of his life in captivity, and here you may see the unusual sight of a donkey walking a treadmill inside a vast wooden vertical wheel, causing by its walk a bucketful of water to be drawn from a well as deep as the ancient Tower of Carisbrooke Church is high.

And there are older things than the castle in Carisbrooke. In the vicarage garden you will find a Roman villa to remind you of Vespasian's conquest, while on the high downs above, now given up to rabbits and gorse, you will find the remains of a track that was old when the Romans came, leading to a village once the home of ancient Britons above Brighstone. Below these downs stand large and prosperous farmhouses that are in truth more in the nature of manor houses, built of stone with mullioned windows in the days of Elizabeth and James.

Having covered the main ways there now remains the joy of discovering on your own the unknown island, and I

hope you will not leave until you have found Gatcombe, Arreton, the inn at Newchurch, Billingham, once the home of J. B. Priestley, Godshill, and the Queen's bower at Borthwood. And it should be remembered that the island is equally worth visiting at all seasons. I have found it sunny and warm enough to sit out of doors in February, and there are people who find the sea warm enough to bathe in all the year round.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE GLEN

### *Glen Lyon*

I HAVE KNOWN GLEN LYON SINCE BOYHOOD.

There is no particular virtue in having known a place so long, but it makes a difference to one's attitude to it.

In those days we talked of getting to the top of the Glen as if it were as difficult of access as the Pole. There were no motors. A horse might get there in a very long day.

There was no way, so we were told, over the great hills that guarded the top of the Glen on its western edge. But legend had it that the Campbells went that way on their unforgettable visit to the Macdonalds of Glencoe. Indeed, to us it was something of an achievement to reach the entrance to the Glen on foot, as it lay nine miles away from our headquarters at Aberfeldy. Aberfeldy seemed remote enough when one came to it from the south, for to reach it entailed much changing of trains and eventually being deposited at the terminus of the single-rail line from Ballinling. But Aberfeldy to the dwellers in the Glen was the metropolis, its base for supplies, mails, and news. It boasted a market-square, a golf-course, and everything that an ancient burgh could desire, even to a picturesque Provost, who presided over a tweed-mill that had earned the commendation of Kings and Queens.

Indeed, on a wet day in the season you might count on meeting a quite fair sprinkling of those whom you had last seen in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot, now turning over the endless rolls of tartans for which the Provost has a transatlantic fame. Certainly I never saw such a bold array of colour south of the Border.

I well remember one dismal day of incessant downpour when the Bond Street air of the shop was rudely disturbed by the rolling entrance of a half-tipsy elderly tinker, followed by an old bent woman with a rug that was as wet as it was dirty draped over her head and shoulders. A shiftless lad carrying the sort of "lanthorn" that one seldom sees today, except in the hands of a Shakespearcan clown or in a museum, came third, and the party's rearguard was an even more shiftless lad who oozed water with every step he took.

The drunken tinker demanded a Mackenzie rug. He inspected the one hanging up by the door.

"It's no gude enough," he said. "Show me yin o' yer ain."

"We hae no Mackenzie in stock just the noo," said the assistant deferentially.

"Then ye mun gie me yon. Yon's a Hunting Fraser. I'll jist be takin' yon."

He handed over two one-pound notes and seemed scarcely to be interested in his five shillings change.

He draped the new rug gracefully over the old woman's head, and the quartette rolled uncertainly out of the door.

I saw them an hour later. The old woman was now wearing the old, dirty, saturated rug over her shoulders, and the bulge showed how well she had concealed the new expensive rug in the dry.

After the harvest, the tinkers have a lot of money. Few, I feel, dispose of it as wisely.



Within recent years I have made my headquarters at Fortingall, which stands just at the entrance to the Glen.

You might find the silence at night a little disquieting. No cars pass after dark. We are not on a main road.

A bus brings the papers and mails at nine o'clock in the morning and, after traversing half the Glen, comes back to pick up the outgoing mail at 2.45 p.m.

The most exciting things that I have ever seen from my bedroom window have been a lonely ploughman, with sack over his shoulders, spend the whole of a day of drenching rain ploughing furrows that were much more than a furlong in length ; reapers six months later cutting the corn with a scythe and gathering it into sheaves by hand ; and two tinkers marching stolidly up and down playing the pipes, also in the rain.

No sight could be more peaceful than that from the hotel. Just a score or so of long rectangular fertile fields stretching away to the banks of the river that winds invisibly about a thousand yards away below a steep razor-edged hill, whose sides have been generously covered by the Forestry Commissioners with spruce.

The village possesses a handsome thatched parish hall, a long row of picturesque thatched cottages, a handsome church with a three-thousand-year-old yew-tree in the churchyard ; and opposite the hotel in midfield stands the Plague Stone on which I found the inscription : "Carn Na Marbh." Here lie the victims of a great plague in the fourteenth century, taken here on a sledge drawn by a white horse led by an old woman.

There are, too, remains of a Roman camp.

But in the Glen itself there are monuments that were old when the Romans came.

One's first impression of complete desolation soon changes.

There are ghosts.

This Glen was formerly very active and well populated, and its quietude is not that of a place not yet come into its own, but the quietude of the dead. Great saints and famous warriors once made their influence felt in these hills ; but they have left behind only stones that few can rightly decipher and legends that appear to be mainly contradictory.

Did Captain Campbell pass this way to his horrid deed at Glencoe ? Did Prince Charles Edward hide in this cave ? Was this the route taken by Alan Breck ?

Three things about it are certain. The ancient Picts defended the Glen with their round forts. The Romans used it as their farthest outpost. It is now in the hands of the stalkers of deer and the shooters of grouse.

The hamlet stands about half a mile outside the entrance of the Glen proper, which is so narrow that it gives no indication that beyond the ravine it is going to widen out into a gentle stretch over thirty miles long. Indeed, there were up till 150 years ago as many villages in the Glen as there are miles ; and the number of standing stones and ruined castles show how ancient, vigorous and large was the former population.

Almost at the entrance to the Glen is a tinker's pitch.

I have been often told that the tinkers are a peaceful folk except among themselves, that they fight like wildcats for the possession of a camping-ground, and that the winner brooks no rival near his throne.

In the light of this I found it strange this very afternoon to see two distinct camps, cheek by jowl.

In the eastern camp there stood an almost derelict blue Austin Seven, a green V-shaped tent, a smaller round tent,

and a tousled-haired young man sitting over a wooden box eating heartily. His red-headed wife bounded up the wet bank to greet me and demand alms. Clutching at her skirt in wet kilts were Catherine and Maud, four years old and two, fair, like herself, with big green eyes.

"I brought my last to birth two months ago on that cabbage-patch in that tent," she said.

"But who occupy the tents down there?" I asked. "Is that part of your family?"

She laughed scornfully.

"No. They're Mackenzies. I'm a Reed. I married a Townseley."

I thought the Mackenzies and the Reeds were at daggers drawn, but only two yards separated the Reed *ménage* from the Mackenzie family, who also boasted an Austin Seven (red) and were superior in the possession of a radio.

It was queer to hear the refined accents of a B.B.C. announcer coming from the drenched tent of the tinkers in this remote Highland Glen.

But it was no queerer than the sight of that golden-haired tinker girl careering off with my shilling to wind up the Austin and make off eastwards towards the village.

"Maybe it'll be spent on shoes for Catherine," said my wife.

"Maybe," I said.

Since when has a tinker's child worn shoes?

Just beyond the tinkers' camp there are high precipitous rocks on either side of the river, which falls with a grand music down a wooded precipice that is very like Aberglasyn.

Anglers on the road-side of the river descend by a ladder that lacks many steps to a wooden, projecting terrace that has no railing. It always frightens me, but today, as I stood

watching the smiling peat-coloured maelstrom below, I forgot my fear in laughter.

On the other side of the water a white-faced, elderly gillie, carrying a rod, broke through the undergrowth and marked a likely spot for his laird, in a Campbell kilt and a cloth cap.

He cast, and his line got neatly interwoven with the leaves and boughs of the tree overhead. He was soaked through, but the loss of his temper almost dried his clothes.

When he eventually got disentangled he cast again, and this time caught a much stronger bush behind.

I stayed to enjoy a scene that would have appealed strongly to Rudyard Kipling.

I owe my first introduction to the Glen itself to Jimmy MacDonald, the mail-driver. But Jimmy, alas, was badly gassed in the War and he is dead. It was he who showed me the place where Queen Victoria's carriage turned in this narrow defile. I rather gather that a rock had to be blasted to make the turning possible.

It was he who showed me the high boulder from which MacGregor, outlawed from the Glen, leapt to safety from his pursuers across the great chasm. It was nearly five hundred years ago and not much is known for certain about him, but his wife was a Campbell and he risked his life to visit her in the Castle of Carn Ban, and it is as easy to people the ruins of the castle with her ghost as to see his flying figure poised among the rocks above the river.

It was Jimmy MacDonald who used to stop the bus opposite the derelict grey bridge that spans the Falls of Allt Du Ghob.

"Yon's the Roman bridge," he would say, and the whole bus-load of us would gaze on it in reverent silence until such time as Jimmy elected to drive on.

We stopped a lot along the Glen. At every farm gate Jimmy would descend and leave the paper and occasionally a parcel, and sometimes a red-haired smiling girl would come out of the house and trip across the field or garden for a word with Jimmy. He knew every one by his or her Christian name.

There must be many lovers in the Glen, for the bark of every mighty beech-tree in the avenue at Woodend is heavily incised with interwoven hearts or initials of lad and lass.

I hope their fates were happier than that of the hapless wife of MacGregor of Carn Ban. On an old map of the Glen there is a note that "Here the Campbells slew the MacGregors".

The deep-wooded glen of the Grey Goblin (Bodach Odhar) on the other side of the Glen sounded a happier note, for Carn Ban itself was finally burnt out by the raiders of Lochaber, and there is no story of the Grey Goblin behaving worse than the raiders.

Here, where the stretch is wider and the Glen gentler, lived the saints. St. Ninian had his seat at Suidhe Inian, and there is a footmark of St. Palladius on Asig fhiamaidh while St. Eonan's successful prayers to avert the plague in the seventh century are commemorated by a stone cross.

Jimmy showed me the big stone with a hole in it through which the plague vanished, and another flat boulder between Ruskich and Slatich where the men of Garth left their sandals before their battle with the MacIvers.

Indeed, there was so much to see that I always felt bewildered by the richness of the material beside me ; so bewildered that I forgot the great heights leading up to the shoulders of mighty Lawers on the south, and the wild Mealls on the north.

But always I used to keep my eyes skinned for the sight of stags feeding on the tops and half expected to see bands of merry men in green coming down the winding tracks bearing home the stricken deer slung under or over the mountain ponies. But though deer are as plentiful as salmon up the Glen I saw little of either from the bus. The whole hillside seemed to be dotted with black-faced sheep with thick and long fleece that looked as large as stags, and with boulders that from below seemed mighty like sheep.

After some hours of this ever-changing winding Glen the bus came to its turning-point at a little post-office just where the river was crossed by a greystone bridge.

The road led on up the Glen past the great Castle of Meggernie for a further twenty miles, but the mail-van had no concern with that. Its journey was over and, after a wait of an hour and a half it started back, having given the dwellers in the Glen time to read and answer their letters, picking up the return mail and parcels on the way along.

In an hour and a half there was time to do little more than sit in the rocks below the bridge and watch the water go by, and there were, moreover, three adventures to be undertaken from the post-office as starting-point, the adventure to the top of the Glen, and the adventure of the rough tracks crossing the mountain ranges north and south.

I took the northern adventure in the snowy month of March and, after walking along a stony track that was more like a river-bed than a footpath, I reached heights that enabled me to look out over the vast black loch of Rannoch to peak after snowclad peak of the whole Grampian range, and then, on the Great Divide between the watersheds, I came upon the deer, a hundred of them ranged on one slope and a hundred on the other.

So far from fleeing from my approach they stood stock

still, looked up at me from their grazing and, having fixed me with their stony stare, remained immovable.

I am always uncertain about the habits of deer. I only know that when I am alone on these desolate heights a stag assumes a very frightening aspect.

To add to my sense of loneliness and childlike fright the snowstorms swept over the mountain top, obliterating the whole earth and the two herds. I could only just see my watery path a few feet ahead. Once I lost that, I was lost indeed.

Then, as quickly as it swooped down, the storm swirled away, leaving the stags just as still, just as menacing. I walked more quickly, whistling. Looking up some two or three hundred yards farther on I saw to my dismay that both herds were now moving in a parallel line with me. They were not going to let me out of their sight.

It was a cold day, but I felt very hot. I hurried, as if hurry would help against a creature as fleet of foot and nimble as a Highland deer.

Then I was comforted by two black specks high up above the hills. Golden eagles are no longer common in Scotland, but I know an eagle from a buzzard.

I was among kings. My only society was the Monarch of the Glen and the Emperor of the Emyrean. I could hardly hope for better this side the grave. I lost my fear in a sense of exaltation. I slowed down. I was on top of the world. And almost immediately the deer forgot all about me and went on grazing. It will be a long time before I forget the glory of my walk up the Allt na Bogair and down the Allt Chalbhat.

The excursion over the hills to the south of the Bridge of Balgie was less adventurous because the track was capable of taking a car, though only one passed me all day. It was

devoid of stags and eagles, but it enabled me to bathe in a peat-brown pool of incredible coldness and to walk more or less dryshod.

By far the best of these adventures was that up to the top of the Glen.

I left this till last, and it was the peak of my achievement.

On leaving the post-office at the bridge I found the imposing white castle lodge barring the way in front, but a road ran through pine-woods and among high bracken above the castle drive, and I looked down on the rich harvest-fields and long avenues leading to the sixteenth-century keep built by Mad Colin and added to by the famous Campbell of Glencoe, now owned by one of our millionaire tobacco magnates, the cadet branches of whose family occupy other houses in the Glen. A flamboyant scarlet flag, with what looked like gold coins emblazoned on it, fluttered happily above this one-time stronghold of the Campbells. An aeroplane overhead destroyed my illusion of complete isolation. A dragonfly at my side almost restored it.

The sight of the remnant of five Pictish forts, to one of which, "Caistall con a Bhacin", the hounds of the Fingelian huntsmen used to be tied, completely restored it.

The sight of a man walking along the road added to the sense of desolation. But there were still scattered cottages on both sides of the river, some with boats moored up on the shingle, that made me wonder how they ever got provisions from the outside world. Their news-source was obvious enough. Each cottage had two high poles and an aerial.

I saw about a couple of tons of coal pitched out by the roadside, and a great clatter of stones, where a field had once been, marked the passage of the great flood of 1933.



And so at long last I came to the end of the road at the loch which gives the Glen its river and its name.

Here I left the car and went ahead on foot, determined if possible to find the way over the mountain range in front that led into the land of Argyll.

The way along the loch bank was so clearly marked that I expected to find it possible for motors.

Instead, it disappeared into the waters of the loch almost at once, and I was once more reduced to a long walk in a watery bed. By the time I came to the other end of the loch—three miles—I had had more than enough of water.

And even at this far end there were cottages and men in the fields gathering in the corn.

I asked the young man at the nearest cottage how far on were the Burial Ground and Chapel, and he gazed at me sadly and said, "A fair way yet."

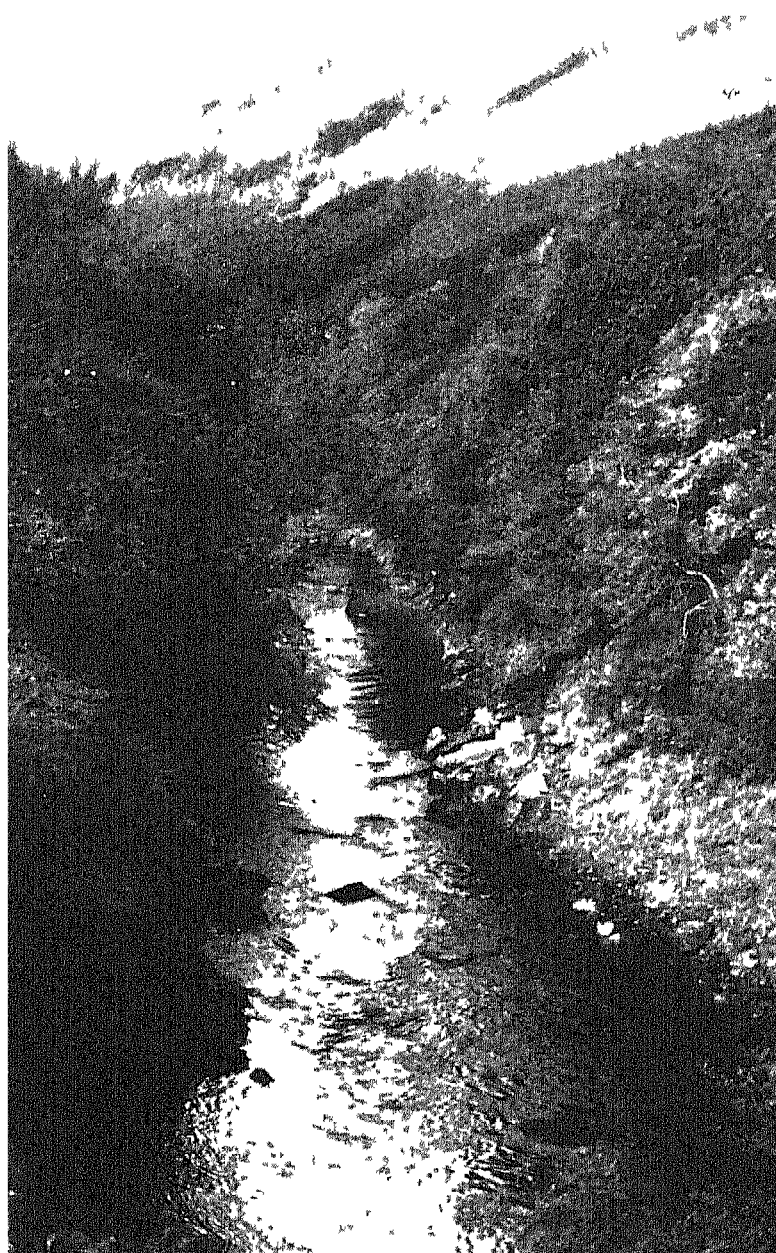
As they are only marked on the map as "Sites of Burial Ground and Chapel", I did not expect him to know of their existence. I asked him if there were any stags.

"They've been roaring all the forenoon. Ye'll see them round the corner."

He was quite right. I climbed another watery track up between the mountains and again on both sides stood herds of deer grazing. For some time they failed to sense my coming. I got within three hundred yards of the most beautiful stag I have ever seen. He seemed to lie down on catching sight of me, so that for a long time I saw nothing but his huge antlers. Then two ravens mocked me from the black corrie above and I walked on to the Great Divide, the wild boundary between Perthshire and Argyll.

I looked at the winding track going away below me, disappearing between Ben Dorain and Ben Chaisteil past the ancient burial ground, and I turned back before I lost





the sense of wildness. I knew that somewhere round the corner ran the railway and a road.

I had found the pass across the mountains. I knew that there was a way out. I was content to leave it at that, particularly as I was still uncertain about the behaviour of stags. I retired in good order from the Allt Tarathan to the croft and asked the crofter his opinion.

"Stags'll no attack ye on the hills where they've room to get away. It's when ye meet them on a road that ye need to be careful."

I asked why there was one herd of hinds with a stag on one hill and a herd of hinds with no stag on the other.

"They came up and shot a stag yesterday," he said.

And yet here they were quietly grazing as if nothing had happened and taking no more notice of me than if I had been a raven.

Yes, they did scatter once. I clicked my camera and they went off over the hill like a flash.

I walked back along my watery path under the green hills to the car and asked my driver why I had seen no birds, only multitudes of sheep.

"Because it's green," he said. "There's no heather up here for the birds."

On the way home we encountered only one car. It contained one occupant, the driver, who was the district nurse.

A fairly difficult job, hers, I imagine.

I don't want you to think that it is essential to go thirty miles from Fortingall to see a stag.

I have walked up the burn at the back of the hotel and disturbed them as they came down in the evening to drink, and within half an hour's climb come on them calmly grazing in full daylight.

D

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE RIVER

#### *A Broadcast on the Adur Valley*

#### *Introductory*

SUSSEX, SAYS HILAIRE BELLOC, IS OF ALL ENGLISH COUNTIES the most resilient. In view of the fact that of all counties it has been the most overrun by foreigners since the Norman Conquest it has need to be.

Its resilience is partly due to mud.

There was a time when the inhabitants of Horsham had to go to London by way of Shoreham and the sea.

Defoe tells us of a lady of Lewes being hauled through the mud to church by a team of six oxen. Riders to hounds today find themselves plunging into morasses of almost impassable mud as they essay the woodland rides of the weald in mid-winter, and in February from the railway-carriage window you find yourself looking out on a succession of inland seas where the risen rivers surge round barns and farms.

The hinterland therefore remains relatively inviolate in its bed of clay. The seaboard or, in Belloc's phrase, the maritime plain, has been less lucky. It has been ruthlessly savaged by third-rate speculative builders.

Where once stood the flint walls and thatched roofs of fishermen's cottages and sheep farms there now stand, stretching without a break much farther than any eye can see, rows upon rows of "Sea View" bungalows and "Chez

Nous'' villas, housing hordes of urban clerks and typists who have as little affinity with the county of their adoption as the standardized houses in which they sleep.

It is by a queer irony that the song which stirs in all true Sussex men the world over an almost overwhelming nostalgia should so strongly stress the loyalty to that very part of the county which is least Sussex.

The return of the native to the Sussex seaboard must be tragic indeed, so complete has been the palimpsest.

Only on the war memorial and in the churchyard will be found the old Sussex names. Only leaning over the so sadly transformed sea-wall will be found the true Sussex speech coming from the lips of grizzled ancient mariners.

The Cockney Conquest has not been to the seaboard's ultimate advantage.

Between the ravaged seaboard and the wet weald stand the dry chalk downs, which are, according to Belloc, forever safe from the danger of an upward spread of the seaboard spoliation by reason of the fact that water drains through the chalk and so makes their summits uninhabitable.

I wish I could share that belief.

Already, in spite of protective legislation that no building shall be erected above the three-hundred-foot contour-line, there are houses obliterating, presumably forever, the smooth green slopes and gentle harmonious curves that give to the South Downs their peculiar quality of serene loveliness. Already the ancient green tracks are barred by wire. The freedom of the downs is fast fading. Poets of the future may well wonder where on these desecrated hills the poets of the past found inspiration.

A ruined seaboard, a fast-disappearing downland lead to the third and last line of defence, the Sussex weald. Here, too, the county needs all its powers of resilience, for

the mud and flood have not been strong enough to deter the stockbroker from converting and enlarging the old brick and timber farms to his urban needs, or the passing motorist in search of distraction from converting the homely simplicity of a village bar parlour to the stereotyped sophistication of a London cocktail bar.

What with her seaboard turned into a dormitory for city workers, her downs turned into a public park for city walkers, her wealden inns turned into roadhouses for city motorists, and her people exploited by every budding novelist and journalist in search of copy as persistently and monotonously as her chalk pits are painted by Royal Academicians, you might well think that there is no Sussex left.

There still remains an unconquered and unspoilt Sussex on its river banks.

The Normans divided the country into six strips or "rapes", bounded by five rivers, Cuckmere, Ouse, Adur, Arun, and Lavant.

If you follow any of these slowly from source to mouth you will be surprised to find how much of the old Sussex still lives undisturbed or unaltered by invasions.

I chose the Adur for this broadcast experiment because it is the middle river dividing East Sussex from West Sussex. A whole delta of tiny streams in mid-Sussex winds through too easily flooded meadowlands to form a more-or-less recognizable Adur just below the largest sheet of inland water south of the Thames, Knepp Lake. Here you feel at once that the hand of time has pressed very lightly.

In the two stout Norman churches that stand above the river bank just here, whose size shows how much the community must have dwindled, you will see majestic marble monuments to lords of the manor who still reign over the

village destinies, and just decipherable farm names printed on the ancient woodwork of the pews.

But our way lies along the Adur bank southward, where very soon the whole long, low green line of the downs ahead is revealed in all its distant glory. This sector of the river hasn't altered at all. Between Henfield and Steyning the water becomes tidal, the haunt of heron and curlew, gull and plover, and in winter impenetrable because of flood.

At Steyning, which in Saxon days was the third largest town in England and a seaport, we are at the actual foot of the downs, with Shoreham Gap in front to show where the sea once came.

All along the northern foot of the downs there is an endless chain of hamlets and villages which have miraculously preserved their mediaeval spirit together with much of their mediaeval appearance.

Bramber's Norman keep is in ruins, but Steyning has preserved not only her Norman church and Tudor grammar-school, but has lately recovered a prehistoric *menhir* with singularly clear markings. Steyning's ancient timber and brick and flint houses have been acquired by foreigners, but here the spirit of Sussex has been strong enough to subdue and assimilate all foreign bodies, and so remains, in spite of conquest, pure Sussex.

This is true also of Bramber and of Beeding, where they still speak of the escape of Charles II as if it were in their grandfather's time.

The last stretch of the river takes us through the gap in the downs, past little lost downland churches on the one bank and the striking cement-works on the other, to Old and New Shoreham, where you can see the battle for conquest still raging.

Shoreham, once one of the great yards for the building of



clipper-ships, still retains witnesses of her ancient splendour in two of the finest Norman churches in the county. The mediaeval friars have gone and in their place stands, on the long bank of shingle on the south bank of the river, as ugly a collection of bungalows as any in the land. But the river itself suddenly assumes tremendous activity, thrusting one arm through the locks of Southwick to the long Aldington Canal with its power-station and gas-works, and the other flows past coal-wharves and yacht-building sheds to the harbour mouth opposite the lighthouse of Kingston Buci.

If you pass this hurriedly in a car you will dismiss it as one more instance of uglification by industrialism, but if you stay awhile you will find hidden behind the railway a village green where cricket is played by men as truly Sussex by tradition and birth as the villagers of the Weald ; market-gardeners still holding their own against the builder. Down by the lock you will find old seafaring men who served their apprenticeship in windjammers. The kingfisher still flashes past, in spite of the chemical works. Larks still sing above the downs, in spite of "drives" and "avenues" cutting into their ancient haunts.

Mushrooms and blackberries are prolific, and the gorse still bursts into flame in spite of the coming of the golfer. And if children no longer roll their painted Easter eggs down Good Friday hill, the hill still retains its ancient shape and name.

Indeed, in spite of outward appearance, as we hope to show you, all is not yet lost in Sussex, not even in Sussex by the Sea.

#### THE BROADCAST

For we're the men from Sussex,  
Sussex by the Sea.  
We plough and sow and reap and mow,  
And useful men are we ;

And when you go to Sussex,  
Whoever you may be,  
You may tell them all that we stand or fall  
For Sussex by the Sea.

*Mais :* Sussex is shaped like a rasher of bacon with five little rivers cutting across the grain. I am now going to take you for a walk down the middle of these rivers—the short, muddy, and difficult Adur that separates East from West Sussex. In doing this walk—it's quite easy for anyone to cover on foot in an autumn day—you'll see sudden and startling changes in the face of the land and in the character of the people. You'll pass from the ancient, untouched loveliness of the thick forestland where the Adur rises, over the wet clayey loam of the green weald which the risen Adur rules by flood in winter, through the cleft a mile wide and five miles thick in the chalk downs which the Adur has bored for herself, to the seaboard, where men have almost abandoned the gracious business of building ships and growing fruit for the more lucrative but much less gracious business of building bungalows for the invading hordes of foreigners. Here the Adur, after a long twist to the east, forces an outlet through the shingle back to the English Channel.

I am speaking to you from a very ancient brotherhood hall, now the Grammar School of Steyning, something over halfway down the river, a town that in Saxon days was the third town in England, and I'm surrounded by a group of some thirty men and women of Sussex who will, I hope, enable you to make up your mind about the Sussex character.

Sussex prides herself on never having been conquered, on retaining, in spite of repeated invasions, her own very strong individuality. She "won't be druv". Some call this

characteristic obstinacy. The point that stands out is that the man of Sussex has decided views of his own and stands by them. You'll be able to judge of that when you've heard them.

Let's begin our walk.

I began in the thick woods of oak and ash and pine that form the southern outpost of the ancient forests of North Sussex. In the deep dells are the hammer and furnace ponds where the first cannon were forged in this country—ponds that still feed the infant Adur. The felled oaks used to be borne down the water to the great shipyards of Shoreham to be built into wooden men-o'-war to fight the French in Edward III's reign. The forest industry has changed. You couldn't roll a log far along these dwindled waters today, and though ships are still built at Shoreham, the timber for them no longer comes down the Adur from the forest. The iron trade has gone north, the timber south, and the forester now makes bricks, good warm Southwater bricks, to help build the half-timbered houses of this sandy land.

Sport, unlike the old industries, remains. This was King John's favourite hunting-ground and, as I wandered among the scores of little streams that trickle southwards through these woodlands, I disturbed a multitude of carefully preserved pheasants, and some seventy cub-hunting riders to the Crawley and Horsham hounds disturbed more than one brace of young foxes. This is still very much a feudal land, and interest is pretty evenly divided between pheasant and fox, so that any contemplated electrification of the railway line that runs alongside the Adur is as little encouraged as woodland-walking in the breeding season.

Two big estates march side by side up here, each with its castellated mansion built on the site of earlier ones, each standing in a large park, one a preserve of pheasants and the

other of deer. In the deer park of West Grinstead, where Alexander Pope wrote *The Rape of the Lock*, the Crawley and Horsham hold their meet after the hunt ball.

In the pheasant park of Knepp, the seat of the Burrells, the same pack of foxhounds holds its opening meet on the first day of every November.

Just outside the two parks standing on the banks of the stripling Adur, are two stout Norman churches, roofed with grey Horsham stone—Shipley and West Grinstead—both containing Burrell monuments, and the names of the surrounding farms painted on the pews. The Adur here is about twelve feet wide, sluggish, weed-covered, and reed-fringed, and crossed at each churchyard end by an ancient bridge under which pike still lurk, but of the former glory little remains. Six hundred years ago, Edward II held high revel here. Today the whole of the population of both villages wouldn't half-fill one of the churches. Only Hilaire Belloc in his windmill, the feudal lords, and their vassals remain.

At the end of the stone-flagged way to the church at Shipley stands the combined post-office and general stores, a sore temptation to choir-boys, for its window is crammed with bottles of sweets. And inside I was served by the postmaster's daughter, Alice Coleman, who, at sixteen, seems to have no desire to desert the quiet of the Adur valley for the excitement of the town.

Close by is the hundred-acre lake of Knepp Castle, the largest and quietest sheet of water in the South of England, where I found the head keeper of the estate, Mr. Curtis, prowling about on his lawful occasions.

*Curtis* : We've a great variety of wild duck, teal, mallard of every sort, coots, moorhens, grey herons, the great-

crested grebe, and wild swans. I've seen nineteen on the lake in recent years. They breed there because there's plenty of food and quiet waters.

There's almost every kind of coarse fishing in the lake, roach, perch, rudd, carp, exceptionally good tench, and very big pike.

About three years ago a fellow was fishing for pike with a live bait. After waiting some little time, he got a bite, and a terrific pull as he struck. He stood up in his boat and pulled round. After playing it for a few minutes, he pulled it to one side and landed it in his boat. It looked to me from where I was standing like a fish with a tail at each end. Actually what had happened was he had landed two pike with one hook—a small pike had taken the bait, and a large pike had taken the small one. I've about four thousand acres in my care, much of it woodland, and we breed quite a few pheasants. Of course, we get all the kinds of pests that prey on the pheasants—some of them live in our woods, others live in the village around.

Those that I see at work include the fox, stoat, weasel, and magpie—specially the magpie. Of course, a stranger coming among pheasants wouldn't see one in twenty, but they know me and they come around when I whistle.

*Mais* : What's your call for pheasants ?

*Curtis* : Well, it's just like calling chickens. I know other people use different calls, some of them very peculiar.

*Mais* : There's an old disused lock just beyond West Grinstead church, but nowadays the whole of the land is flooded as soon as the wet weather comes, and I've often had to cross the swollen Adur, not by the clapper bridge or the wooden bridge at Butcher's Row, but by a Blondin act along the top rail of the field-fences. The fox swims it, but

the hunt has to go miles round. But Mr. Mitchell will be able to tell you more about that, for he both hunts and farms this country.

*Mitchell* : We don't have to do a Blondin act to make the hunt difficult. I hunt as often as I can, and I needn't tell you that the heavy clay and the thick old woods give us plenty to think about.

*Ayesford Duke* : I've had forty years with the Crawley and Horsham pack, and I don't think I'd complain about the country.

*Mitchell* : Oh, I'm not complaining about the country, Mr. Duke. It gives us grand sport.

*Mais* : It's not much rougher than the outfield of your cricket ground, Mr. Mitchell.

*Mitchell* : I suppose you say that because you can't make any runs on it.

*Mais* : Oh, I score on your teas. That's how you get a side like Southwick to play you. Great trestle tables under the trees, loaded like a harvest supper. Why bother about the cricket? Of course, you spend your life in sport, hunting, cricket, riding point-to-point, and so on.

*Mitchell* : In between I manage to farm a few acres of land myself, keep a few head of cattle, and, of course, there's my butcher's shop. You saw that. It didn't look neglected, did it?

*Mais* : It did not. That block of yours had been pretty savagely knocked about with a chopper for a hundred years or so.

The Adur's largest tributary comes in from the East just about here, below Partridge Green, and the land is always wet in winter, but it affords good pasturage for the milking-cows for the rest of the year.

We have left the woodland behind, and the land opens out to a wide flat green land. The river has now become tidal and more muddy, and there are usually herons flapping lazily over the reeds, and reed-warblers singing in them, and kingfishers flashing past. The road winds south with margins wide enough to be called commons, with geese and cows on them, and ahead stands the smooth green barrier of the South Downs, with only one visible gap where the Adur has worn her way through.

This is a land of "rhines" and "rués".

"Rhines" are water-dykes too big to jump and "rués" are narrow-hedged packhorse or foot-path ways, with high hedges on either side, relics of smuggling days. This is the "Roadmender" country, the land so lustily praised by Belloc in *The Four Men*, who spent a memorable night in the "Fountain Inn", Ashurst, and the last resting-place of Margaret Fairless Dowson, authoress of *The Roadmender*, who loved this land no less.

On the rising ground above Ashurst stands a red-tiled, half-timbered farm called Sweet Hill. All the farms hereabout are of old brick and timber. Benches and a tarred barn and a railed-off square in an adjoining field show that the farmer approves of village cricket. His name is Ayesford Duke, and when I went to call on him, his wife told me to walk on into the top field, which was rutted by a long-disused dung-cart track, and whistle for him. I nearly forgot to, so taken was I by the beauty of the line of the downs seen over the unclipped hedges. In the end I ran him to ground over many wet fields. He has a particular claim to be here, because he is an old boy of this school.

*Ayesford Duke* : Sweet Hill is my farm, and the field where you found me, Mr. Mais, is called Sour Bottom. My

land is mostly turned over to pasture, except about twelve acres on the top, where I grow root crops and kale.

*Mais* : And three nice long benches.

*Duke* : Well, that's Ashurst cricket ground. There wasn't any cricket at Ashurst until I came here eleven years ago. I got them going, and this last season we won more matches than we lost.

*Ayling* : I remember you playing at Steyning, Mr. Duke.

*Duke* : I made the first hundred on that ground. Steyning cricket ground was a ploughed field when I first remember it, and they used to hold the Steyning Fair there. Now it's one of the finest grounds in Sussex.

Farming today isn't anything like it used to be. The little farmer looks like being knocked right out. Owing to shortage of labour everybody has to have the up-to-date machinery, and the small farmer can't afford it—milking-machines, tractors, and all the other implements.

You can't get young men on the land now—they go down into a shop or something. Easier life and no Sunday work. I've made some money farming, but I've lost it again, that's where the devil comes in.

I don't know that the young people will be any better off, because I've enjoyed myself all my life. For forty years I hunted, and for fourteen of those years I rode the same horse and won two point-to-point races on him. St. Vincent, his name was. It's no use going hunting without a good horse. If you've got a good horse you can take advantage of what you know of the lie of the land, you can judge the line of the fox. For me, anyway, the pleasure of hunting lies in keeping in sight of the hounds—there's many a man goes out hunting today and never sees the hounds.

*Mais* : While we're in the middle of hunting-country—let's sing.

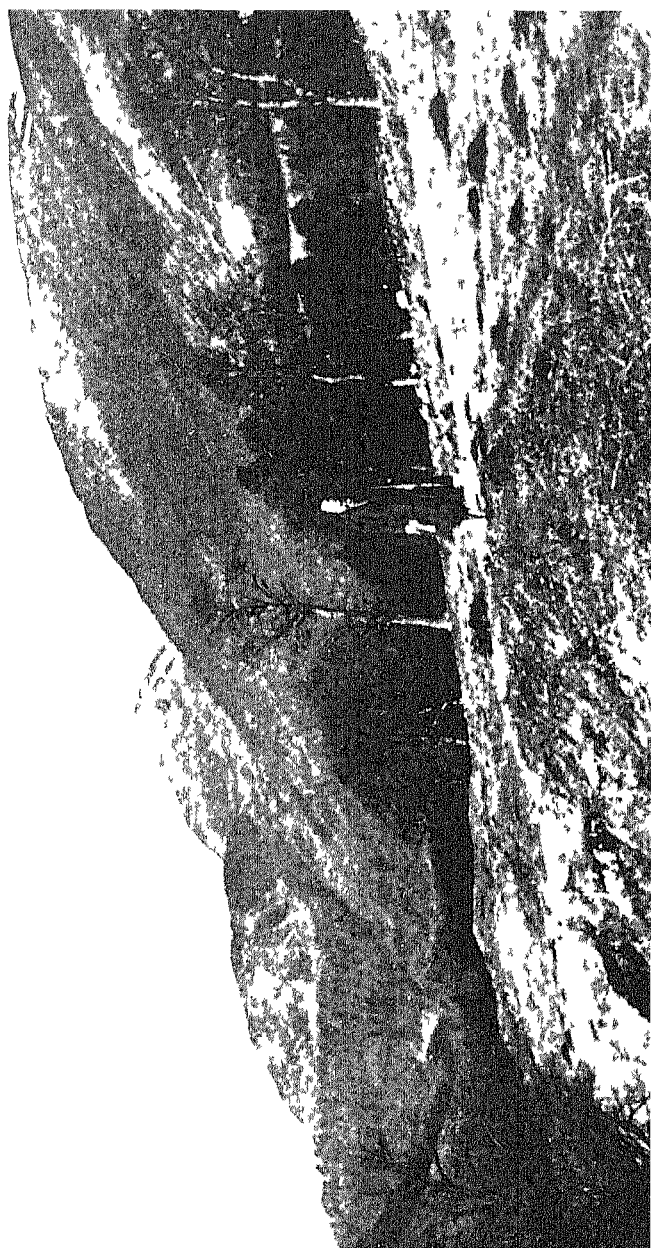


Our hounds and our horses they all were so good  
As ever broke cover or dashed through a wood.  
Our hounds and our horses they all were so good  
As ever broke cover or dashed through a wood.  
Come fill up your glasses and round let us drink,  
For whilst we are hunters we never will shrink,  
Tally ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ho !  
Hark for'ard ! Huzza ! Tally ho !

*Mais* : No road now passes anywhere near the Adur for some miles, nor is there any bridge other than one railway bridge. There are nothing but waterways, and it is quite usual in February to see farms islanded with only boats to keep their lines of communication open. The water often rises over the tops of the fences and up to the barn roofs. But at this time of the year the tow-path makes grand, quiet walking. I was on it last Sunday. There were, in half a dozen miles, only about half a dozen men sitting smoking as they dallied with rod and line, and their womenfolk wandered about looking for blackberries and mushrooms, or lay basking in the hot sun. There was one pair of young lovers and one pair of old ones reviving old memories, a man and a girl in shorts hiking, and among the rough marshlands a shepherd dividing his sheep. Otherwise there were no living things beyond the grazing cattle, an occasional rising fish, and a few plover.

And so I came down the waterside to this red-roofed town of Steyning. It is difficult to believe that it was once Steyning Harbour or St. Catherine's Port, and that Roman galleys and Saxon ships once anchored in this bay. There's not much seaport left. You can't even see the sea. It's at least half a dozen miles away the other side of the downs. Steyning stands high and dry above the wet fields and below the dry downs. Steyning may have been responsible for the Norman Conquest, for Edward the Confessor gave the





site of her Saxon church to the monks of Fécamp, and Harold took them back again, and this brought William over to recapture them. But Steyning's most famous worthy was the Saxon shepherd, St. Cuthman, who kept his flock in bounds by drawing a circle round them with his crook, and kept his mother in sight by wheeling her up and down in a wheelbarrow, and when the cord of the barrow broke in a hayfield, the haymakers laughed; and from that day to this, storms have always destroyed the crops in that field.

Today Steyning is a very picturesque medley of gables and weather-boarding and flint houses and Georgian brick. It has also antique shops and tea-houses, and these make one feel the first contamination of the seaboard. Down to this point we have been purely rural. Now, Mrs. Howe, you're a farmer's wife and a farmer's daughter. You remember what Sussex was—and not very long ago, either.

*Mrs. Howe* : I do. Before the war, when I was a child, Sussex was still old Sussex. We brewed beer and baked bread at home. Now we buy them, and they're not as good. The miller would call for a sack of wheat and bring back the flour, less ten per cent for grinding. From this beautiful stone-ground flour we made bread to last a week in a brick oven, burning wood from the farm. I remember thorns gave the fiercest heat. Besides the loaves of yeast-cake made on baking-day we used to make coger cakes for the carters and shepherds to take out for their lunch. They're made of flour mixed with a little chopped fat pork and water to a soft dough. A small slice of fat pork was then placed in the middle of the cake, which weighed about half a pound when finished.

The wife and children of a farm labourer often got enough wheat by gleaning to keep the family in flour through the winter, and enough offal to keep the pig.

E

*Above Loch Rannoch*

We always reckoned to kill enough pigs in the winter to keep us in bacon, hams, and meat for the whole year. It made a lot of work salting and smoking the bacon and preserving the meat in brine, to say nothing of quantities of hog's pudding, which I have often helped to make.

We never wasted a scrap of the pig. Even the lights were chopped up, mixed with groats and made into sausages. Black puddings were made by mixing groats and a little fat with blood from the pig. We make everything into puddings. The Sussex hard pudding made of flour, salt, and water, well boiled, has come down to us through hundreds of years.

We still make plenty of wine : elderberry for colds, blackberry, dandelion, parsnip, rhubarb, potato, and mangold wines, usually for funerals and Christmas.

*Chorus* : I've been to France and I've been to Dover,  
O-ver, o-ver, o-ver, and o-ver.  
Drink up your liquor and turn the horn over.

*Mais* : 'That's an old Sussex drinking-song. A hornful of drink was handed to you on your hat and, without touching it with your hands, you emptied the horn and tossed it in the air before the song finished. If you didn't, you had to try again. Do you remember that, Mr. Standing ? I ought to tell you that Mr. Laddie Standing, who is eighty-one, is better known in Steyning than St. Cuthman.

*Standing* : No, I don't know as I've heard that song before, and I've got a very good memory, as well as knowing a bit about music. When I was in my early 'teens one or two of us chaps used to "muck about" with cornets, then the lads of the village thought it would be all right if we got together and formed a band. I was the first to give my name in, and the Steyning band we'd formed met for practice

at Beeding. Anyhow, we stuck to it, and after a lot of practising we got our first engagement—we were to play at Ashurst Club Feast. That was in 1879. I remember we assembled at the "Fountain" pub, and then marched down Golden Lane to the field where the "do" was going to be held. Halfway down the lane, Bandmaster Green, who we used to call "Major", told us to stop as he thought there was something wrong, and there was too—half the band were playing "Golden Lock of Hair" and the other half were playing "Dear Little Jessie". Anyhow, we sorted ourselves out and finished the rest of the day in grand style. I remember it was a regular smart turn-out, with most of the men dressed in their Sunday best, which at that time were smocks and half-high hats.

I was the first to join that band. All the rest are dead, but I'm still a playing member.

*Mais* : What do you play, Mr. Standing ?

*Standing* : I started on the cornet. Now I'm playing the tenor sax, but I want to get on to the French horn eventually. Of course, I'm still a member of Steyning Church choir and have been for sixty years.

*Mais* : You've seen a lot happen in Steyning.

*Standing* : I have. I remember coming up Church Street one day in the 'nineties, with a barrowload of glass. I saw old Mr. Cripps flitting about Osborn House, which used to be the registry office, and, of course, I knew something was on. So I stopped and asked, and just then a cab pulled up and out got Mr. Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea, just going in to be married.

*Mais* : You looked pretty busy when I called at your carpenter's shop the other day.

*Standing* : I thought you were trying to sell me some newfangled gadget or other. I'm busy enough. I still

put in a full day's work, though just lately I've been taking Saturday afternoons off.

*Mais* : I hope I'm putting in a day's work at eighty-one. Now just beyond Steyning, on the west bank of the river, stands the ruined Norman castle of de Braose, Bramber, with more tea-houses, and on the left bank stands the less sophisticated hamlet of Beeding, where Charles II was so nearly caught by his pursuers after Worcester. It was indeed at the "King's Head Inn", which commemorates the passing of this king on his way to Shoreham, that I met the Three Musketeers—Reuben Smith, Sam Stringer, and "Bowzer" Newman. How did you get that name?

*Smith* : They call us that because we're always seen about together, and I reckon we've all done every job there is to get a living at in Sussex, from rabbiting to building flint walls.

*Mais* : How do you build a flint wall?

*Newman* : Well, the real flint wall is a black-faced one—that's where the flints are broken to a flat face to the heart of the flint. There's an art in cracking the flint, of course. The idea is to hit it once on the top, then turn it over and hit it again, then it should break clean in half.

*Stringer* : It should, but it takes a long time to learn how to do it.

*Newman* : Then you build the wall with this flat, shiny surface outwards, either in rows, or, as they say, at random. The random laying isn't necessarily the worse wall.

The old flint walls are built practically dry. There's a little lime and some ashes and sand, but no cement. Nowadays we find it easier to use cement. I don't think you'll find anybody who can build a dry flint wall now.

Some people like a boulder wall, or "bowzer" wall, as it's called in Sussex—that is, a wall of uncracked flint. I think

the black face looks better, and I think it's a better wall, too.

*Stringer* : Most of my time I work on my own, and you can't beat it. Just now, until Christmas, I'll be working several days a week at hedging and ditching, and that's a skilled job too, as well as being rough. For over twenty years, the hedges round here have been neglected. A well-kept hedge is the best way of fencing land, a lot cheaper than wire, and looks a lot better, and if ditches aren't kept clean you might as well forget your drainage system ; the land gets bogged.

*Mais* : What's the special skill in hedging and ditching ?

*Stringer* : The skill in hedging and ditching is making the price. But my favourite job is colt-breaking. Horses are the kindest animals in the world. It's a dangerous job, but I like it. I love horses. I'd take one to bed with me if I could, but he wouldn't take his shoes off.

Of course, Reuben and I do a lot of rabbiting. We have been called the Sussex Creepers. I reckon I can go to any bush you like to name, up the valley of the Adur, the downs on either side, to Brighton or Arundel—I can go to any bush you like to name in the dark. I've only lost myself once, and that was in the same field that my house was in, and I reckon it was an hour before I could find my way, and I was as sober as I am now.

*Smith* : I'd match myself against anybody in the South of England at trapping rabbits. Of course, I'm what you'd call an unofficial trapper, or used to be. I've caught as many as two hundred rabbits in a night, and you couldn't do that unless you knew how to handle your gear. At different times I've caught three Alsations and a policeman. I reckon that's about my biggest catch. Of course, one of my chief anxieties was to keep partridges and pheasants out of the traps. You know, you don't train your birds properly,



Mr. Curtis. I could snare a pheasant where you wouldn't get within a hundred yards of him.

*Curtis* : You just let me catch you trying.

*Smith* : No, you got me wrong. I was talking about catching pheasants, not catching me. . . .

*Mais* : One bank of the river here leads up gently and the other steeply to the downs. On the gentle slopes Mr. Reed grows outdoor fruit and vegetables. His speciality is rhubarb, twelve varieties.

*Reed* : My family has been market-gardening for ninety-seven years, first at Portslade and now at Beeding. My grandfather started it, and my father, my brother, and my brother-in-law are all market-gardeners.

*Mais* : That might give you the impression that land is going over to food-production, but it isn't.

*Reed* : True enough. I should think that during the last ten years, at Southwick alone, over three hundred acres have been built on.

*Mais* : And what do you feel about all this good market-garden land being sold for building purposes ?

*Reed* : Oh, I don't worry myself about that. If a land-owner can get a good price for his land for building-purposes, he has a perfect right to do so, and if people from London want to live in Sussex by the Sea, well, isn't that a compliment to Sussex ?

*Mais* : It's no compliment to Sussex to kill it.

*Reed* : Well, market-gardening's my subject. I grow practically all the different varieties of vegetables and salads. My principal crop this year was green peas. I grew fifteen acres.

*Mais* : Fifteen acres of green peas ? How do you get all these peas picked ?

*Reed* : Oh, that's easy. You see, I employ about a dozen

or so of the local young ladies of Beeding village, and not only are they good workers, they're jolly good-looking too.

*Mais* : I walked down the tow-path on the western bank which brought me past the two little lost down churches of St. Botolph's and Coombes, each now no more than a flint church and a farm. Coombes church, among elms and aspen trees, still has the tapsel gate that's peculiar to Sussex. It swings on a pivot, and there are a wooden grille and wooden bolt on the church door. Service is held once a week, on Sundays at 2.15. Yet Coombes was mentioned in a Saxon charter, and has its place in Domesday. St. Botolph's stands at the water's edge, and Coombes nestles into a fold of the downs. Both cry out for a modern Goldsmith to shed a lyric tear on the deserted villages of the downs. There were wharves here once for the fisherfolk, and the wool made the yeomen prosperous.

Above, on both sides of the Adur are the chalk downs, the smoothest, greenest hills in all England, where South-down sheep have been grazing pretty well ever since the neolithic tribes who peopled these downs mined for their flints. There are big isolated farms, and barns, like Sullington Manor—Mr. Hecks' farm.

*Hecks* : It's a fine farm, Sullington Manor, with a big old tithe barn and a Norman church next door, where Canon Palmer and his father held the living for a hundred years between them. In the churchyard there's a yew-tree nearly a thousand years old. The war memorial is a stone roller we used to use on the farm, upended, and the names carved on it.

Storrington Band always comes here on Boxing Day to eat bread and cheese and drink beer. Rain, snow or fine, they've come for thirty years, and now, after playing to us,

they always go to the grave of one of their old comrades who died of wounds and sound the Last Post.

This farm's a great farm for sport—foxes for the foxhounds, hares for the beagles, otters for the otterhounds, and badgers for the terriers—and pheasants for dinner after all that. And rabbits for the poachers. And they always hack back through Sullington Manor to eat bread and cheese and drink beer on the way home. We've a special old oak-tree-stump for them to eat their bread and cheese on.

I keep a good flock of Southdowns, and they need plenty of arable land to give them a change at least every two years. They give the best mutton, but they're more difficult to raise than any other breed of sheep.

*Blake* : You need a good shepherd, anyway.

*Hecks* : My shepherd's been with me all the time I've been at Sullington, and that's thirty-one years. He never takes a day off—wherever the sheep are he's with them. He bells his sheep in the old manner—a yoke of wood, cut from a furze stump as a rule, put over the neck with two leather straps to hang the bell.

*Mais* : Up on top the lark always sings overhead, the gorse is always in bloom, the white flints are always being sweated through the thin green top layer of grass, and the beech clumps, notably Chanctonbury, form a beacon or landmark for all the forest and weald. This land has probably changed less than any other in Sussex. You can still see the hill forts of our earliest ancestors, the tracings of their tillings, their flint-mines, their burial-grounds, their highways, and their dew-ponds, where they kept the water from filtering through the chalk. You will only meet shepherds and riders up here.

*Blake* : You'll find me up there any time after half past six in the morning. I've got two flocks up there—Dorset

Horns and Kerry Hills. Kerries are small limbed and make good meat, and so do the Dorset Horns. I'll be pleased to see you if you do come up, because very often a day'll pass without meeting a soul, especially this time of the year—although it isn't so bad as people think.

I used to bell my sheep, but a bit back the bells all got clogged up with mud, and I cleaned 'em and put 'em in a bag, and I haven't had 'em out since.

There are three kinds of sheep-bells—cluckets, lattins, and canisters. Bells are tuned to different notes, so that you know your own sheep by the sound.

In the shearing-time, when the shearers gets in the barn the first thing they do is to rattle the shears on the ground for a glass of beer. They reckon to shear five sheep and then have another dong on the bell, then, if they find a sheep with a black spot, that means another drink.

*Mais* : You deserve a drink after shearing five sheep. How often do you find a black spot ?

*Blake* : Well, we happen to be lucky just now—you see, amongst Kerry Hills there's plenty of black spots, and the Dorset Horns have a nice lot of black spots, too. So sheep-shearing time isn't as dry work as it might be.

*Mais* : The Adur here has cut a valley about two thousand yards across, and now only occupies about twenty yards of it, leaving the wide green marshes for the grazing cattle and the birds. There is very little activity on the water itself, except old Brown punting the sand down in his great barge. There's an occasional canoe or a sailing-boat.

*Rosa Rowley* : It's too cold on the water now, but most evenings in the summer we take out the canoe. I've taken a canoe up the Adur with the tide as far as Bramber and returned with the ebb. The water's a sort of dirty yellow, and you can't see the sandbanks, which may be only a few

inches below the surface of the water. It's rather tricky under the Norfolk Bridge, there's very strong fierce currents there. Often, even in summer, you have the river to yourself.

*Mais* : But there's plenty of activity all the time overhead. As soon as we come through the cleft through the downs on to the maritime plain, we see at once one vast green reclaimed saltmarsh that is now the Brighton, Shoreham, and Worthing Airport, with Captain Saint in charge.

*Saint* : There was an aerodrome here in 1910, and such fliers as Beaumont, Garros, and Gustav Hamel gave exhibitions here. It was the control point of two very big air races in 1911 and the terminal point of a race from the Crystal Palace to Brighton. In that year, too, it was the scene of the Empire Michelin Cup, won by the late F. C. Cody.

One of the first flying-schools in Great Britain was formed here in 1912 by the famous Pashley Brothers, and C. F. Pashley is still giving instruction at the airport.

We have a landing-area giving average runways of over a thousand yards ; a building equipped with land communications to all parts of Great Britain and abroad, direction-finding wireless, a restaurant, and our own railway station.

I hold the first commercial pilot's licence in Great Britain, and I've had twenty-three years' flying. I was a test and experimental pilot for nineteen years. The machine I first flew was a Graham White box kite used by Graham White himself in his race to Manchester. It had no instruments at all, and only a thirty horsepower engine. We sat out on two booms with a luggage-strap to fasten us in—a strap we wouldn't even use to fasten boxes on the carriers of our motor-cars today. You know how different flying is today, no more of an adventure than taking a cab. Only a short time back a pilot came in staring at three pennies on his

palm. He said an old lady got out of the machine, came up to the cockpit, put the threepence in his hand, and said : "Thank you, driver."

*Mais* : There are two Shorehams. In old Shoreham's magnificent Norman flint church you will see monuments to captains of frigates, mastmakers, and shipwrights ; but outside little remains of the old except the flint wall of a farmyard and some thatched cottages.

New Shoreham also has a magnificent Norman flint church, and a very remarkable thirteenth-century building of Caen stone and knapped flints in chequered squares. This is called the Marlipins.

But time and the Adur have played strange tricks with Shoreham. The mediaeval priories and hospitals are now submerged. A high bank of shingle, topped by hideous bungalows, blocks the river's way to the sea, so she turns at right angles eastward past the shipyards where for centuries wooden ships were built for the Navy, and later for privateering, and later still for barque and brigantine, schooner, and smack. Shoreham supplied twenty-six ships for the siege of Calais, beat off the French raiders, and became the main source of West Indiamen and China tea clippers. Up till quite recent times it was the haunt of smugglers, "owlers", as they were called, who transferred the smuggled bales of tobacco on to barges in Shoreham wharves, then ran the barges on the tide to Beeding chalk pits, where vans waited to carry the contraband to the buyers in the Weald. The shipbuilders' sons became market-gardeners, and these gave place to the builders ; but here's one, Mr. H. A. Ayling, who has kept his indoor glasshouse work going in spite of the modern invasion.

*Ayling* : I've got about two acres under glass—peaches, grapes, mushrooms, tomatoes, cucumbers, bulbs, and

chrysanthemums. I used to grow beautiful grapes, but we're tearing them up pretty fast now—foreign grapes are taking the place of the English—but there's a rising market for peaches. I've been growing under glass for fifty-five years. I was apprenticed to the first growers who cultivated mushrooms. It was a new industry then, but scientific laboratories were put up and made an enormous change—something like a hundred per cent increase in the produce per plant. For instance, in those days we had the mushroom spawn in brick form, with about twenty-five per cent growing spawn. Now the spawn we get is a hundred per cent.

Shoreham was a different place when I first started growing. It was then a big fishing-port. There were great oyster-beds along the mouth of the Adur, and scallops were brought in for the Brighton and other markets, and the oyster and scallop-ships were lying three abreast in the river from the Norfolk bridge. Oysters were sixpence a dozen, and scallops a penny, twopence, and threepence a dozen. Those were the days of the Shoreham clippers. There were three shipyards in Shoreham building them. Now they're all gone.

Shoreham was a very rough place on November 5th. The rival shipyards used to roll lighted tar-barrels down the street into anybody that was too slow to get out of their way. All the shops were closed and the windows barricaded. We don't rely on tar-barrels for our sport nowadays. I was one of the pioneers of Shoreham football, which started here in Shoreham Grammar School. Then came the South Down football club, and now Shoreham is one of the best-known amateur football teams in the country. When I played for Sussex, football was very robust, but not quite so fast as modern football. I'd call Southwick a very good

example of modern amateur football, and I think the secretary of Sussex County League, Mr. Ablett here, will agree.

*Ablett* : It's more of a player's game than a spectator's in this county. Southwick has provided Sussex with forty players. I played with Southwick village team when they met the "Casuals" some years ago. There were seven internationals playing for the Casuals, and we drew, 2-2.

*Mais* : That was my introduction to the village. I could scarcely believe it, a village football team beating the best of the Oxford and Cambridge sides for about eight years.

Southwick is where the Adur finally enters the sea, and Southwick, in spite of building, still retains its village green and its great tradition of sport. Hounds no longer meet on the green or cows and geese graze on it, but cricket is still played there.

*Brasted* : We've got a playing-membership of thirty-six, and we play the teams up the Adur Valley up to Partridge Green. We have two teams in the field every Saturday from the first Saturday in May to the last Saturday in September. We run a Cricket Week in June when we play the B.B.C., the Civil Service, and the Sussex Club and Ground. We have some men in the team who are what you might call characters. I remember Mr. Mais came up against one when he thought he'd done a good thing by altering a cold supper into a hot dinner. One of our team said he'd come for a cold supper and he was going to have a cold supper, and he wouldn't have anything to do with the hot dinner and ordered bread and cheese.

*Mais* : Cricket is played all over England, but where else but in Sussex do they play the game of Stoolball, which



Mrs. Strong maintains is the father, or is it the mother, of cricket ?

*Mrs. Strong* : It was played in the fifteenth century, and that's long before cricket. When men played women at Easter they played for a tansy as the stake. There's an old folk-song :

Down in a vale on a summer's day  
All the lads and lasses met to be merry,  
A match for kisses at stoolball to play,  
And for cake and ale and cider and perry.

It's played rather like cricket, with a flat board called the stool for wickets, and a ball rather smaller and lighter than a cricket ball, bowled underhand. The bat is like a large table-tennis racket. It's very popular here and the League shields and cups are very keenly fought for.

*Mais* : The Adur falls into the sea at Kingston Buci, exactly between Shoreham and Southwick. Southwick lies on the east side of the mouth and contains two locks and a harbour where yachts of every size and sort lie up—it's the nearest harbour to London, and there's great industrial activity up and down the two-mile-long canal, of traders carrying coal, oil, timber, and bricks. Dutch schooners, Brixham trawlers, Breton onion-boats, windjammers from Finland, all pass through Southwick locks. Here's the lock-keeper, Bob Atterbury.

*Atterbury* : I've been looking after Southwick lock for twenty years. It's getting busier every day. Not so long ago we locked eighteen ships through in four hours and a half, ships from four hundred or five hundred tons up to fifteen hundred tons. It isn't a monotonous job, though. Visitors to the beach have to come across the lock gates, and

I see the same faces year after year. They must like Southwick. Bathing belles as well. One gives me a bar of chocolate, another gives me a cigarette ; so, you see, it isn't monotonous.

Sometimes during the winter Captain Rowley here comes up with his tugboat and a string of barges behind him. Down comes the traffic lights, and he clears everything off the locks, and then we talk to one another in strong nautical language.

*Rowley* : Well, if you don't do a bit of damage sometimes, they'd never know we were there.

*Atterbury* : Oh, I know you're there all right. Not all the ships coming in carry lights, and I get shouted at in every language, although "Come aboard and have one" I can understand in any language.

*Rowley* : I've been sailing out of Southwick Harbour for thirty-five years, and I've had the tug here for the last four years. Shoreham Harbour is a very difficult harbour to get out of——

*Chorus* : Southwick Harbour.

*Rowley* : All right, we'll call it Southwick Harbour. Anyway, it's difficult to get out of, with a terrible tide running above the pier, especially at the springs. The principal job for the tug is to tow hoppers with spoil out to sea, after being dredged up out of the harbour. The dredgers brought up a few queer things in the harbour, including swords, an alligator's head, spare bicycles, and babies' prams.

*Brasted* : What about the coral worm ?

*Rowley* : Well, I'm going to tell you what my opinion is about that. Some forty to forty-five years ago, there was dredging-boats used here for oysters and scallops. On these shells are worms, and the worm was knocked off on to the decks

as they were packed. Afterwards we used to clear the decks with water, and the worms would get washed over the side. At first they were no great matter, but since the electric power-station has been built, the water has been warmed up, and since then I really think the stuff has been breeding fast in the warm water.

*Atterbury* : I reckon in another couple of years there'll be sea-serpents.

*Rowley* : Anyway, they've been doing damage.

*Voice* : Biting sailors' heads off ?

*Rowley* : No, boring into wood in the harbour. I don't know what they're going to do about it.

*Atterbury* : Shoot 'em.

*Chorus* : For we're the men from Sussex,  
Sussex by the Sea.  
We plough and sow and reap and mow,  
And useful men are we ;  
And when you go to Sussex,  
Whoever you may be,  
You may tell them all that we stand or fall  
For Sussex by the Sea,

CHAPTER FOUR

THE VILLAGE

*Broadcast*

(i)

*Bridgnorth*

I CAME INTO BRIDGNORTH BY THE ROAD FROM WOLVERHAMPTON. It sprang right up before me with quite overwhelming suddenness.

At one moment I was travelling along a typical Shropshire leafy lane with occasional farms of warm red brick and cottages of black and white when we dipped without warning through a cutting in pink sandstone rock that was so deep that at first I thought it was a tunnel. Then, through the trees, I caught sight of a thin veil of light-blue smoke on the opposite side of the Severn drifting about halfway up the opposite hill, half-shrouding a host of dark-red roofs and houses in which the lights were just lit. Above the smoke I saw the outlines of a church silhouetted on either end of the hilltop, one a pseudo-Greek affair with a cupola and the other with a restored handsome sandstone tower.

Bridgnorth, seen suddenly like that at evening with the colours of the leaves in the trees all russet brown toning in so happily with the dark-red roofs opposite, made an impression upon me that I am not likely to forget.

It was like a blend of Rye and Matlock. It is all warm and cosy and red like Rye, rising a couple of hundred feet straight above the river with little narrow stone steps and

alleyways leading up to the High Town. The magnificent bold cliffs covered on the top with trees and sides all riddled with caves reminded me of Matlock.

But its chief glory is not its likeness but its unlikeness to any other town. Bridgnorth is unmistakably Bridgnorth.

First I descended the steep eastern slopes to Low Town on the east bank of the Severn and then I came to the great Severn itself, today, by reason of the recent rains, muddy, high, and so fast-flowing that even the swans find it hard to ferry themselves across. It is spanned here by a six-arched greystone bridge built just over a hundred years ago. Just below is a most fascinating island fringed with trees—the home today of ducks, the haunt of bowlers.

Bridgnorth's reputation and prosperity in the old days was built up on its river trade. Indeed, up till less than a hundred years ago, Bridgnorth was a considerable inland port. Ships were built here and barges capable of holding forty to sixty tons of grain and malt and iron left for the sea. You can still see the remains of the old quay, the mooring-places, and the strip of iron along the top of the walls for the tow-ropes to slide along.

I've got with me here Mr. Lester, once foreman brick-layer to the corporation. He is now eighty-seven. He probably knows as much about the barge-days as any man living.

Will you tell listeners what you remember of the barges, Mr. Lester ?

*Lester* : Well, the first part of it is that my father was a bargeman and he promised to take me to Gloucester some time, and he kept his word and took me when I was five years old. We were three days on the journey going and coming back.

*Mais* : How big were the barges ?

*Lester* : They carried sixty tons if the water was sufficient, if the water was low they would not bring more than thirty tons. They had to keep to their course, or else they went wrong. They made their own channel.

*Mais* : Where did the bargemen live ?

*Lester* : In the caves, mostly. Some of them lived in the same street—Castle Street—where I live now. But most of them lived in the caves under the Castle Hill.

*Mais* : Is there anything wrong with the caves from the point of view of living in them ?

*Lester* : Of course, a good many of them have fallen in now, but in those days they were quite all right and as clean as a new pin.

*Mais* : Well, now, about the railway. You were concerned with that, weren't you ?

*Lester* : Yes, I was between eight and nine years old, and I used to carry the picks for the navvies. I was there on the Saturday afternoon when the first bar went through when both sides of the tunnel met. They made the hole large enough and the foreman took me by the collar and back of the trousers and shoved me through the tunnel, so I was the first to go through.

*Mais* : Well, when I had crossed the bridge I came to High Town, this citadel of sandstone with warehouses and mills at the foot, and houses backing right on to the cliff-face, with caves that were formerly used as houses. You can climb the rock by steps all cut up through the rock face or you can save your breath and for twopence return be transported by the cliff railway, which claims to be both the shortest and steepest railway in England.

Here's Phyllis Pritchard, the lift-girl, to tell you all about it.

*Mais* : What is the gradient, Phyllis ?

*Phyllis* : One in one and a half.

*Mais* : How long is it ?

*Phyllis* : Two hundred feet.

*Mais* : How exactly does it work ?

*Phyllis* : The man at the top fills one lift with water, and the weight brings the other one up.

*Mais* : How much water ?

*Phyllis* : Two hundred gallons for the lift and thirty gallons for each passenger.

*Mais* : What happens to the water ?

*Phyllis* : It keeps on being poured out and back again.

*Mais* : How many passengers a year ?

*Phyllis* : A hundred and forty thousand.

*Mais* : What happens if it breaks ?

*Phyllis* : It can't.

*Mais* : Do you ever find anyone too afraid to come in it ?

*Phyllis* : Often.

*Mais* : Well, can they race it if they run ?

*Phyllis* : No one has yet.

*Mais* : It sounds a good competition to start for visitors.

The town this afternoon has been lively with the Saturday market, which is held in booths in the High Street, and runs from meat to wheelbarrows. Countrywomen with baskets sit or stand behind long low benches under the arches of the town hall offering half a pound of butter, a bunch of marigolds, a handful of mushrooms and a trussed fowl or two.

Down in the bull-ring I found a genial auctioneer offering eggs and ferrets and : "Here's five brace of pheasants from Lord Forrester, shot at Willey Park yesterday. Who'll say five and nine a brace ?"

The auctioneer was very friendly. He kept on interrupting his sale.

"Hi, George," he said, "you never said good morning to me this morning."

"Hi, Ted," he said, "you can't leave your car out in the road, the police'll see you."

One of the first friends I made in Bridgnorth was a girl from South Shields who came south with her family to find work and disliked it at first so much that she cried for three days. The second girl I met came from Lanark, and she, too, on arrival longed to go straight home. She had never even heard its name before she took this job.

Well, I know my England fairly well, but I had never found any reason to visit Bridgnorth before this broadcast was suggested.

I knew it to be on the fringe of, if not actually in, the Black Country, and I knew it to be on the Severn. That was all. No one had ever suggested to me that it was pleasant or unpleasant. It was just another bit of unknown England.

Travelled writers, according to the official guide-book, have compared Bridgnorth to Gibraltar, Edinburgh, and the fortress towns on the Rhine. Somebody has even compared it to Jerusalem.

As I've never been to Jerusalem I can't say anything about that. But it's not much like Edinburgh. It is a very ancient town of red-roofed, red-brick houses, set at the foot, on the sides, and on the top of a red sandstone bluff, which rises two hundred feet above the richly wooded banks of the Severn. The cliffs on both sides of the ravine are riddled with caves, and the lift connecting the Low Town of the tourist cafés with the High Town of the market and main street is like the lift at Lynton.



At either end of the High Town stands a church, one St. Leonard's, with a fine sandstone tower used in the Civil War as a powder-magazine and blown up ; the other St. Mary Magdalene, running north and south, an Italianate affair built by the engineer Telford.

The Severn, which is here very wide, is spanned by a fine greystone bridge which may or may not give the place its name.

I expected to find a good deal of activity on this river, boulevards running along the banks and pleasure-boats on its surface. But the ancient glory of the river seems to have departed.

Up to less than a hundred years ago Bridgnorth was a considerable inland port, ships were built here and barges left laden with grain and malt and iron for the sea. You can still see a bit of the old quay, the places where the vessels were moored and the iron-covered walls for the ropes to slip along.

You can still see traces of many of the two hundred or so inns that the bargemen frequented, the most common trace being the wooden trap-doors just by the doorsteps of so many of the houses, down which the barrels of beer were rolled.

In the summer there still runs a pleasure-steamer, and I saw skiffs moored up alongside the banks. I was told that so much Severn water is held up in the reservoirs for the great industrial towns that now Bridgnorth only gets a trickle, and indeed it has been, in spite of continued rains, very shallow whenever I have seen it lately.

I was much taken by an island just opposite the town, which looked to me just the place for a swimming-pool and pleasure-park, but at present it is occupied by the bowling-club.

Low Town is mainly occupied by industries. Warehouses back on to the sides of the cliff and hundreds of deep and lofty caves afford sanctuary for stock of all kinds.

I climbed from Low Town to High Town by narrow-stepped rock cuttings, about as steep as the main street of Clovelly, and on the top found the townspeople enjoying the view from the Castle Walk, described by Charles I as the finest in his dominions.

There are a good number of reminders of Charles I, the most striking being the Leaning Tower, the wall of the Norman Keep, blown up by the Roundheads, and left much more out of the perpendicular than the Tower of Pisa, but in spite of its precarious appearance apparently safe.

I had the good fortune to be piloted round the old town by Dr. Watkins-Pitchford, and discovered from him something of the long and honourable tradition of Bridgnorth. Historically, it teems with interest. The first fortress was built here as far back as Alfred the Great's days. The Normans, after their custom, strengthened the Saxon fort, and in the Middle Ages there must have been tremendous activity up and down the Severn of cloth, flannel, wool, hides, cheese, butter down to Bristol, and wines, brandy, and other foreign produce.

Later came the coal down from Broseley, and lime, lead, iron ore, bricks, tiles, pottery, timber, and pipes. The river obviously made Bridgnorth in those days. Indeed, about a couple of hundred years ago Bridgnorth owned 75 trading vessels to Shrewsbury's 19 and Worcester's 21. There were two types of craft, both open and flat-bottomed, the barge or frigate from 40 to 60 feet long with a single mast and square sail, carrying from 20 to 40 tons, and the tow—60 feet long, 16 to 20 feet wide, a main and topmast 80 feet high with square sails, and sometimes a mizzen-mast carrying

from 40 to 80 tons. The captain was known as a trowman, and the trow carried a crew of five or six tough bargemen, who had a pretty reputation for fighting, drinking, smuggling, and poaching.

For several months in the year there wasn't enough water for the heavy barges, and Telford, who was the Shropshire county surveyor, got out a plan of weirs which was defeated because the public disliked the idea of weirs and the barge-owners disliked the idea of paying tolls.

It would seem on the face of it that even now a weir would make a tremendous difference to the pleasure side of Bridgnorth life in reviving the defunct rowing-club, and in generally making the river pleasant for swimming and navigation.

It was, however, the coming of the railway about eighty years ago that finally killed the river traffic. The last barge to come down to Bridgnorth sank there just forty-three years ago.

The town's most exciting epoch was, of course, in the Civil War. It began a little before, because in November 1641 the two bailiffs of the town had four pints of brandy given them at the town's expense as they took part in the great watch against the rumoured Catholic rising.

In the Civil War the Castle was besieged by Cromwell and capitulated after being warned that they were to be mined from underneath, through one of the caves. During the Civil War the town was set on fire three times.

In view of this, I was surprised to find the lovely black-and-white Tudor house in which Bishop Percy, the author of Percy's *Reliques*, was born, looking much the same as it must have looked in 1580, with its three gables and ornately carved beams.

But there aren't many houses that go back before the Civil War. There is the tiny half-timbered cottage in St. Leonard's churchyard, where Richard Baxter lived during his curacy in 1640.

The half-timbered upper storey of the town hall, which stands in the middle of the High Street, dates from 1650, and here are kept the two maces, 1676 and 1754, the heads of which can be turned into loving-cups, and other corporation insignia.

There are fragments of the castle wall, and the whole of the sandstone north gate, newly refaced, still stands.

There is, too, a very picturesque and dignified street leading to St. Mary Magdalene, called East Castle Street, with a tall chimneyed brick house which was once the home of the castle steward or governor.

From High Town there are views, not only of the richly wooded winding Severn, but also westward over the Wheatlands to the long ridge of Wenlock Edge and the sharp beak of Cleve Hill.

The eastern side of the river, in distinction to the Wheatland, is known as the Ryeland, so on the west bank you have all pasturage because the wheat was not worth cultivating, and on the east a good deal of arable.

Miss Frances Pitt, who probably knows as much about animals and birds as any other living person, lives in, farms, and hunts the Wheatland, and I had the privilege of seeing both her prize Hereford cattle at the Alleynes and her unique flock of tamed wild geese, a flock containing every known type of goose in these islands, running entirely free in the park.

From the High Town market I went down again to the Low Town to go over a mill with the delightful name of Pale Meadow. Here I saw benches sixty-seven yards long,

with men making chintzes and cretonnes with hand-blocks and hammers, and making transfer-prints. They sometimes have to have as many as a hundred and forty-four blocks for one pattern.

In the dye-room I saw every conceivable colour in pots and met Mr. Hurlstone, the chemist, who is also the originator of some of the most popular designs, together with Mr. Glenn, who can remember the firm when William Morris did the designs.

I discovered that an Italian tapestry firm had come into the town a few years ago, but was in the act of taking its machinery and girls over to Wolverhampton, so I collected three of these girls to tell you what they feel about the town.

Here's Ethel Beck, who comes from South Shields.

*Mais* : You came here in the depression, didn't you, Ethel ? How long ago ?

*Ethel* : Three years.

*Mais* : Did you leave your family behind ?

*Ethel* : No, they came too, and Dad and my brother work in the carpets.

*Mais* : And yet you felt homesick ?

*Ethel* : For the first three days I did nothing but cry.

*Mais* : And now—do you want to stay or go to Wolverhampton ?

*Ethel* : I don't mind going where the work is.

And here's Kathie Ellis from Lanark.

*Mais* : You came here too because there was no work in Lanark ? Did you come with your family ?

*Kathie* : Yes.

*Mais* : And did you get homesick ?

*Kathie* : Yes.

*Mais* : And what do you feel about it now ? Do you want to stay here or go to Wolverhampton ?

*Kathie* : I'm ready to go where the work is.

*Mais* : And how did the Bridgnorth girls and boys treat you ?

*Kathie* : They couldn't understand what I said. So I had to learn to talk like them.

And here's Phyllis Baker, who was born in Shropshire but not in Bridgnorth.

*Mais* : You've lived here fifteen years, Phyllis, haven't you ? Do you want to go away ?

*Phyllis* : Well, I shouldn't mind, it would be a great change from climbing so many steep hills. Bridgnorth is very hilly, you know.

*Mais* : And you actually knew the Italian workmen who were sent over to teach you. Tell listeners something about any of them.

*Phyllis* : We got on with them very well. They work very hard.

*Mais* : Were they liked ?

*Phyllis* : Oh yes, they did all they could to help us.

*Mais* : How about food ?

*Phyllis* : They did not like the English food at first and often had some Italian food sent from London. However, they got to like it very much.

*Mais* : Do you think they enjoyed being in Bridgnorth ?

*Phyllis* : I'm sure they did, especially when they took a liking to our English beer, but they always preferred their Italian wine.

*Mais* : From all this you will see that the tempo of Bridgnorth is slow. It is in no hurry to catch up with the times, but it is determined not to lose any of its old staunch character. Change is not always confused with progress in the Severn valley.

## (ii)

*Fairford*

FAIRFORD STANDS JUST AT THE PARTING OF THE WAYS where the open stone wall Cotswold country merges into the tousled hedge and water-dyke country of the upper Thames valley.

I spent part of this early sunny November day watching the plough turning up the shining black earth in countless small fields that fringe the shallow Coln on the south side of the town.

Southward the vale is a miniature fenland, prinked out with occasional church spires among the poplars and willows. But northward the Coln runs through a chain of pure Cotswold villages of yellowy-grey stone houses on brown earth set on the sides of unbelievably vivid green hills that on this golden day set off the crooked lines of dove-grey stone roofs and the long straight lines of the dry walls more exquisitely than ever. These walls in the sun today looked the colour of shortbread: crisp, yellow, and thinly sliced.

Fairford nestles into this land of open skies and wide horizons with the unobtrusive rightness of a plover's egg on stubble, or, to get the colour right, of a dove in its nest, for its grey roofs look as if they had grown out of the quiet landscape, not been superimposed on it. And this dove has

not allowed its feathers to be ruffled either by the proximity of industrial Swindon, or by the mushroom aerodromes that now engirdle it.

If John Keble, the initiator of the Oxford Movement and the author of that best-selling book of spiritual poems, *The Christian Year*, were to revisit his birthplace today he would find little of its ancient loveliness changed. He would still find the two old inns, the "George" and the "Bull", friendly as barn and farm joined on to each other, occupying the whole of one side of the wide market-square, a symbol of the unity of Fairford. He would still find the eighteenth-century Farmor's school flourishing. Here I met one afternoon unusually alert, rosy-cheeked children, and at a social the night before slightly older and even rosier-cheeked members of the Evening School enjoying a grand feast of their own making.

And he would find, just beyond the school, quite unchanged, Fairford's Perpendicular church all pinnacled and decorated with gargoyles without and rich in timber and stone vaulting within ; but richest in those stained-glass windows bequeathed to his home town by the wool-stapler John Tame in the fifteenth century and in the twentieth century still one of the most colourful wonders of the world.

Time your visit to these windows for sunset, and come to them down the Welsh Way, for this approach gives you a superb view across a green combe of pines, marshland, and little low stone bridges spanning the sparkling Coln to the rise beyond, where stands this towered church.

Inside the church turn at once to the great west window and watch how those gentle golden virgins under the sun's rays come tripping out of their frame to meet you, and how those red, purple, and blue devils take on even wicked



grins as they shovel souls to hell. But the whole church is as full of magic colour as an illuminated missal.

It was wool and the sheep that gave Fairford her windows, her fame, and her fair architecture of old.

It is wool and the sheep that give Fairford her fair name today, as Mr. Eric Gantlett who farms here now will show you.

*Gantlett* : I am convinced that to carry out good farming on our poor Cotswold farms you must have arable sheep, because they produce mutton and wool and also fertilize the land. Arable sheep are Down sheep that are strong enough to stop on our ploughland all the winter and eat the roots. What I mean by good farming is not necessarily the man who makes most money, but a farmer who pays twenty shillings in the pound and, when he dies, leaves his successor with a farm in better condition than when he took to it. I see no object in wanting to retire, for you cannot find a better life than farming.

It is said round here that you have to keep sheep to grow corn, and I believe that to be true. Also, I am absolutely certain that to grow sheep on our farm you must grow corn, for after it has been down to grass for a few years it will starve anything but rabbits.

Our main cash return from sheep is selling ram lambs from our pure-bred Oxford Downs. These sheep are very prolific breeders, have a fine constitution, and produce high-class lamb or mutton. The finest meal I ever have is from a boiled leg of mutton out of one of our Smithfield sheep.

The Oxford thrives equally well on both arable and pastureland, and with regard to early maturity we often get fat lambs forty pounds dead weight at three months. Oxford

Downs flourish everywhere. We actually sell most of our rams in Scotland and the North of England. There are as many pedigree flocks in Scotland as in England, and they are also exported to nearly every country in the world.

Of course, if you want the best Oxfords you must come to Fairford, for, in addition to our flock, only a mile away is the largest flock of Oxford Downs, the "Quenington Flock" belonging to Mr. E. G. Clifford, and just over the river is the famous "Kelmscott Flock" of Messrs. Hobbs and Davis.

*Mais* : Is there any profit in showing ?

*Gantlett* : Unless you get a first prize there is no direct cash profit, but of course there are other advantages, such as the advertising value, for if you get a prize at Smithfield it is in every agricultural paper, and the majority of the daily ones as well. Another reason is that it gives the shepherd a holiday ; a good shepherd is with his flock seven days a week, talks and thinks of sheep all his life, and a week in London makes a nice change.

And it gives me an excuse to get up to London for a day or two.

*Mais* : Mr. Gantlett is an authority on ploughing, and his ploughman, Bert Cusse, won the recent ploughing-match that was broadcast from Moreton-in-the-Marsh.

Do you plough light or deep, and if deep how deep, and why ?

Does horse or tractor suit you best ?

*Gantlett* : I am not an authority on ploughing. It is the success of our carters and tractor-ploughmen in competitions that has given us the name for good ploughing, for between them they have won over forty prizes.

If you don't plough the land well your other cultivations are a waste of time.

The land in England varies to such an extent that the correct depth for ploughing may be anything from three to eighteen inches. Even on our farm, on the stone part at one end, you must set the plough down as deep as you can, and bring up some of the stone, otherwise in a few years the rock will grow up and you will have no soil at all, whereas if you bring up the raw gravel on our black land, all you will grow will be poppies and charlock.

I think a real good horse-ploughman still does the best work, but during the last ten years they have decreased considerably, whereas the tractor-ploughing and ploughs have improved out of all knowledge. The tractor does about six to eight times as much work in a day as horses, and it does not want feeding on a Sunday. In this mechanical age you can get a better class of man to go with a tractor than with horses. I believe in another ten years' time a team of horses ploughing will be about as scarce as a team of oxen is today.

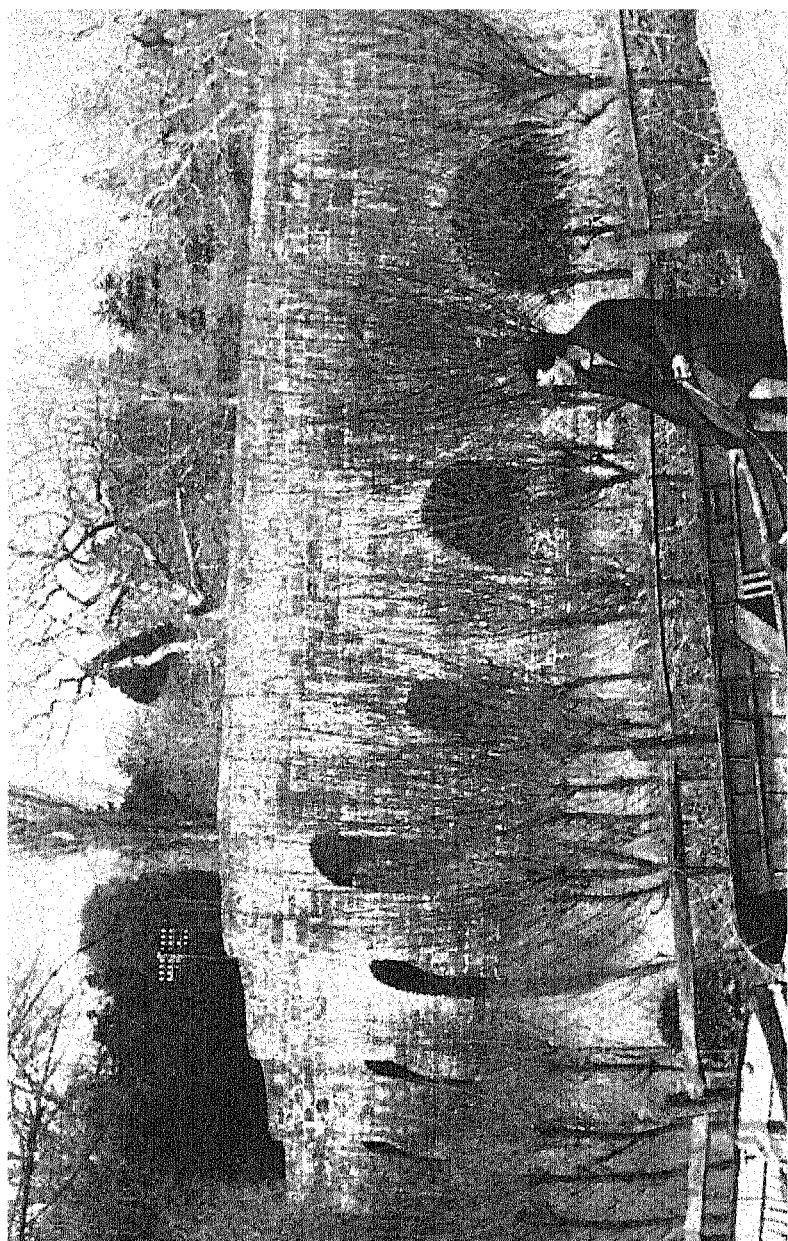
*Mais* : How long have these prize ploughmen worked for you ?

*Gantlett* : All their lives.

*Mais* : You must be very easy people to work for.

*Gantlett* : I'm not so sure about that, for a short time ago we engaged a new man, and afterwards he went down to the local inn. "Well, Garge," said the landlord, "what bist thee adoin' down yer ?" "Oh," he replied ; "I bin an got a job along wi' they Maester Gantletts." "Oh, thee ast, ast ? Well, the best thing thee cast do is to buy theeself a bally bicycle so thee cast kip up wi' they two blighters."

*Mais* : Sheep are not Fairford's only preoccupation. At this time of year everybody is thinking of the Fat Stock Show due in a fortnight, and in the summer all thoughts turn to the Carnival.





*Gantlett* : For some time people have been agitating for an extra bank holiday. Well, we in Fairford have taken one for years. It is always on the second Saturday in July. On that day we shut up the bank and all the shops, at the same time keeping the hotels and public houses open all day.

The reason for this is our Carnival.

Our Carnival was started in 1887 on very modest lines to raise money to help our hospital.

In 1911 it came under the management of what I call the Big Three, that is the two Mr. Chews and my father, and for a quarter of a century they carried out the duties of secretary, treasurer and chairman, and during that period the growth of our Carnival was extraordinary.

Twenty thousand people attend our Carnival each year. We are very fortunate in being allowed to hold it in a most beautiful park right in the centre of the town.

Then there is our procession which alone is worth a shilling, for it is always a mile long, and it is kept lively by over twenty-five bands marching at intervals.

You could not hear a Band Contest of our standard elsewhere in England for under two shillings.

Our Ring number one is watched by about six thousand people at each performance, including two thousand seated, for we have our own grandstand. To give you some idea of the standard of the entertainment one of our turns this year was the Musical Ride of the Scots Greys, and I don't think there was any other show where you could see them for under two shillings.

So, you see, you have six shillingworth of entertainment for a bob.

This year we served over six thousand teas all by voluntary helpers. We charge one shilling adults and

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sixpence children, but a woman can bring all her family under fourteen years of age in for a shilling, and some of our Cotswold women are so prolific I have seen twelve lined up behind one mother.

*Mais* : No wonder they eat a ton of cake.

*Gantlett* : We divide our committee up into sub-committees to run each section, there being ten of them, and we impress upon each one that theirs is the only section that counts in the Carnival.

*Mais* : But there's plenty going on in the winter to keep the young people amused. Katherine Page, who works in a beauty parlour, by day, here runs a Keep-Fit class for girls by night.

*Katherine* : About twenty members belong to our Girls Keep-Fit Club, and we meet in the Croft schoolroom. Our uniform is a white sleeveless blouse and very brief black shorts, and we do exercises to gramophone-music. Lovely names these exercises have : Bucking Bronc, Polar Bears, Elephant Walk, Mountain Climbing. Sometimes we go out to the surrounding villages giving demonstrations with a small team. The members are all over fifteen—teachers, housewives, maids, business girls. One evening a week we reserve for games, darts and table tennis and invite husbands and boy-friends to join us. Yes, all for 2s. 6d. a year and 2d. each evening. If funds get low or we want to buy equipment we organize a dance, and very successful the Girls' Club dances are.

*Mais* : And here's Fred May to talk about the fishing and rabbiting.

*May* : We have netted 200-odd pike in one day, of which ten weighed over 100 lb., and we have wired over

30 in one day, the largest weighing 14 lb. Our largest catch of trout in one day was 176 and 52 pikes, of course, with nets. Our motto is kill the pike and there'll be lots of trout.

We have netted 2500 roach in one day, having over 1000 in the nets at one haul. These were taken to Lechlade and put in the Thames.

Now for the rabbits.

We reckon to start killing the first week in September and finish on March 25, during which time we kill several thousands. We have killed 1300 in nine days this season, having caught with ferrets and nets 165 in one day, and snared 182 the same night. This means long days, starting at 5.30 in the morning and arriving home about ten at night. We have got to work on our job. It's not all sport. We send all our rabbits to Sheffield, where there is a good demand. Of course we never reckon to set traps or snares when the hounds are around. We like to work with the foxhunters as the fox is no friend of ours. We set all our traps underground, not on the top, as you are liable to catch the first thing that comes along.

*Mais* : This all sounds as if Fairford is a very alive as well as a very beautiful place. It is. But I'm troubled by one thing. Is its vitality kept going by the few? Are most of the young people going? If so, why? Is it because their fathers urge them to get out from an un-economic job? Is it because they don't like getting their hands dirty? Is it because they find the machines dull? Is it because their houses are too bad? You who farm this land and live here, alone can answer that.

*Gantlett* : The aerodromes are taking them off.

*McKernan* : Men who've been on the land for thirty-five to forty years won't let their boys stay on it. The housing conditions are too bad. Their hours are too long.



*Gantlett* : Well, they don't work three hundred and sixty-five days. They finish Saturday dinner-time.

*Geach* : And milkers get a week-end off once a month, and still they leave their jobs.

*Gantlett* : They'll come back. The labour-market's easier than it was.

*Geach* : They won't. They go to the builders.

*Baldwin* : We make our own skilled labour, but it is very difficult with Government contractors bidding.

*Gantlett* : The farmers can't afford to pay. The minimum wage ought to be higher. Thirty per cent can't pay the wages. All the Government does for the sheep-farmer is to tell him what wages to pay his shepherd. Why shouldn't barley and sheep be put on the same footing as wheat and beef ?

*McKenna* : Living conditions must be taken into account. Not one boy I've seen in five years leaving school wants to stay on the land.

*Geach* : Transport has caused the change.

*Mais* : And all that transport does is to make them exchange one master for another, and I think for a far worse one. They're far better off staying in fair Fairford. But who's to convince them of that ? Only the schools. And are the schools doing that ? I wonder.

(iii)

*Wellow*

*Mais* : I am standing in a smithy. On the whitewashed walls are hung heading-tools for making bolts and rivets, horseshoes by the score, and fire-tongs. Overhead are rails

of bar iron. Just by me is the fire, and I'm glad about that on this cold night, with the boy pumping the bellows and Dick Trueman, the smith, making a lot of noise on the anvil.

It isn't a horseshoe that he is making, and any listening smith, he says, would know that.

Well, what is it, Dick ?

*Trueman* : It's a gate-iron. You make a horseshoe on the pointed end, but I've been running up and down the whole stidy.

*Mais* : There's a thing I've always wanted to know about blacksmiths, Dick. Why are their aprons always tattered round the bottom edge ?

*Trueman* : When King William went to Scotland he ordered that four leading tradesmen should be called to him, so that he could make one the king of all trades. His aide-de-camp brought the saddler, tailor, cobbler, and blacksmith. The King said he could manage without shoes himself, his horse could go without harness, and his horse could go without shoes, but he could not go without clothes himself. So he made the tailor the king of all trades. On hearing this the blacksmith absconded to the hills.

A short time after the King sent his aide-de-camp to find the blacksmith as his horse had gone lame for the want of shoeing.

The blacksmith was nowhere to be found.

Then the King ordered all the four trades to appear again before him, and he then told them that he found that he himself could manage without shoes and he could manage without clothes, his horse could manage without harness, but his horse could not manage without shoes, therefore the blacksmith must be made king of all trades.

Upon hearing this the tailor became jealous and got

under the table and clipped right across the bottom of the blacksmith's apron for spite.

Hence the tattered apron.

*Mais* : Well, as we're in Sherwood Forest we expect to hear good legends, though *nobody here has reminded me of the legend of Robin Hood.*

Actually, this village of Wellow is just outside the forest, and in the daytime you look out from the door of this red-brick smithy over the village green, and across open undulating country of pasture and arable separated by little hedges and a few streams. In the distance you can see the black mass of forest trees, also more prominently the black mass of a colliery slag-heap, or, as they call them here, "muck-tip", and a whole new colliery town with great chimneys, water-tower and pit wheels.

Just outside the door is the cricket pitch, not so large as Trent Bridge, but probably better fun because there's a small, deep dam close by, and it's a good six into the river. It must come expensive when a slogger gets his eye in.

How many sixes have you hit into the dam, Dick ?

*Trueman* : They never let me stay long enough. I find it easier hitting the telegraph post. You get four for that, although it's a long way inside the boundary. It's an obstruction.

*Mais* : Wellow has two greens ; one outside and one inside an ancient earthworks known as "the moat" that girdles this little community of three hundred and thirty people. The cricket pitch is on the outer green.

The inner green has houses, a chapel, an inn and some shops round it, and a tall Maypole nearly a hundred feet high in the middle, painted red, white, and blue with cross-poles for garlands.

Until quite lately Wellow has led a quiet, uneventful

life under the ownership of the Saviles of Rufford Abbey. But last November this huge property of 15,500 acres came into the market for the first time since the Abbey was founded 790 years ago. The Abbey, where Edward VII stayed for seven years running for the St. Leger, has not yet been sold, but the villages and lands that once belonged to it have all been broken up.

One result is that Dick here, instead of going on renting his forge, has now become its owner.

Is that a step for the better, Dick, or isn't it?

*Trueman* : It cuts both ways. I'm glad to be my own master, of course ; but I don't like to see the breaking-up of this estate. Both my father before me and I have spent our lives working on the Rufford Estate. Except for the War years I've never been off it.

My father has worked on the estate thirty years as bricklayer. I myself went there in 1901 to learn blacksmithing and all about the waterworks, and heating-apparatus, for the late Lord and Lady Savile both took great pride in work done by their own workmen.

\* At the modernizing of the Abbey by the present Lady Savile my father did all the tiling in the twenty bathrooms, whilst I did the cutting and fitting of the panels round the baths after the local plumber had done his work.

*Mais* : What about the Abbey itself? You remember it in the old days, don't you, Mrs. Redford?

*Mrs. Redford* : Well, Mr. Mais, you talked of Edward VII coming here seven years running. Those of us who can remember those days aren't likely to forget them.

I remember seeing King Edward coming in to dinner with the first Lady Savile on his arm, laughing away. He had a grand laugh, like a farmer. And there would be gold plate and wonderful flowers and a spray by every plate.

They had thirty-seven gardeners in those days, and the grounds looked like fairyland all lit up with flowers.

*Trueman* : And there'd be household balls in all the other great houses in the dukeries, at Clumber at the Duke of Newcastle's, at Welbeck at the Duke of Portland's, at Chatsworth and Hardwick at the Duke of Devonshire's, and at Thoresby at Lord Manvers', and we'd all go round from one to the other.

The Servants' Ball was held in the crypt, and was not only attended by their own staff but also the staffs of the Duke of Portland, the Earl Manvers and the Duke of Newcastle, amid the beautiful decorations it was always an outstanding event. Then each summer there was a Flower Show held in the magnificent Winter Gardens, which stand in the grounds, and was followed by a tea and sports with a good band always in attendance. It was always a great day for the workmen and their families. Lord and Lady Savile would mingle amongst the people with a smile, a cheery word, and a handshake for everyone.

Then the gardens—they were spoken of in those days as being among the finest in England.

*Mais* : The break-up of this estate means the disappearance of this grand hospitality. You'll miss all that a very great deal, Mrs. Ragsdale ?

*Mrs. Ragsdale* : Oh yes, we certainly shall. But you know there are compensations in all this change. Too much of that lord of the manor stuff can rob people of their independence.

The breaking-up of the large estates, too, may be deplored for several reasons, but on the other hand the passing of the land to the tenants and other purchasers will, in my opinion, be a good thing eventually.

We bought our farm twenty-seven years ago, when the

outlying portion of Clumber estate—belonging to the Duke of Newcastle—was sold, and we have never had reason to regret it.

The owner-occupier has a keener interest in his farm ; he knows he must keep it in good repair, for “a stitch in time saves nine”, and if it comes to deciding whether to have a car or a new roof on the cowhouse the cows win.

His sons are much more likely to remain on the land when they know that they, too, will own it some day. It is a great pity that more cheap money is not available for farmers, so that those tenants who would like to buy their farms and have not the spare capital could be able to do so.

Farmers work for the love of the land, as well as for money. If they didn't in these days they would all give it up.

Fortunately, none of us have gone bankrupt yet. All the same, farming isn't a very flourishing job just now and, as a result, a lot of young men are leaving the land. It is quite easy to get a young boy of fourteen to come into a farmhouse. His parents know that the good food and open-air life will make a big, strong lad of him. But as soon as he gets to be about eighteen his thoughts naturally turn to “more money”. He knows he can get a lot more at another job than the farmer can afford to pay him, so away he goes. And who can blame him this big, strong lad ? It is not because he is tired of his job but because there isn't enough money in it.

What a pity it all seems. There are thousands of men who have gone off the land who would come back tomorrow if the money was there.

*Oswold* : Well, I'm only a newcomer to Wellow, but I agree with Mrs. Ragsdale. As an Adult Education Lec-

turer I go about all over the county, and the people who come to my classes are mainly middle-aged. I get a sprinkling of the young girls, but scarcely any boys or young men.

There has always been a spirit of rollicking independence in Wellow. In the eighteenth century the village was swollen by labourers driven from surrounding places such as Ollerton and Newall, by the large landowners who worked on the theory that the fewer houses and people in their parishes the better the poor-rate. This policy filled Wellow with a very mixed variety of characters, by all accounts a riotous, hard-drinking, poaching crew.

A hundred years earlier Wellow was the meeting-place for conspirators against the dictatorship of Cromwell, a conspiracy which fizzled out like a damp squib with its hopes probably drowned in one of the five inns the village once had.

Poaching always seems to have been something of a hobby. The Abbot of Rufford found it necessary to get a decree from King John to ditch his deer park against the poaching inhabitants of Wellow.

Then there is the moat. I have done some digging in it, but so far I can't say when it was made ; but it must have given the village a degree of isolation from the surrounding estates of the Abbeys of Rufford, Welbeck, Thurgaton, and Blyth, an isolation which developed some of that sturdy independence of character which so pervades the legend of Robin Hood and his merry men and which is the village keynote today. Mr. Goodwin here is a fair example.

*Goodwin* : I am a farmer. I was born in the 'seventies. I have farmed my farm since a lad. I have done my bit on the parish council. I am a churchwarden, also the old parish sexton, but that's a poor job ; people never die at Wellow. I don't average one a year.

I can remember the old toll bar which stood on the bridge at the entrance to the village. It was done away with on May 1, 1877, and what a rejoicing when it went, a holiday with buns and oranges. I also remember three maypoles ; the one previous to those being sawn down with drunken men. But there was soon another put up which stood until the Jubilee. In 1887 there was a very large one erected. The pole was ninety-seven feet high without measuring the weathercock, which after thirty-four years of faithful service came to a sad end, being burnt down on November 5, 1921, by a firework settling on it. But it has a rhyme which runs like this :

Wellow is a pretty place  
Which you can quickly hear ;  
There's not a prettier little place  
Stands in Nottinghamshire.  
In the midst of the village  
There is a little green,  
And in the centre of it  
Is a Maypole to be seen.  
It was reared at the Jubilee 1887  
And the top is pointing towards Heaven.  
The pole stands up just like a steeple  
And a tea was given to the people.

It was arrayed in garlands fine  
And everyone had a grand time.  
The colour it was painted  
Is red, white and blue.  
And what I am telling you  
I can assure you it is quite true.  
And on the top there's the old gamecock for show,  
And all the time he's been up there  
I've never heard him crow,  
But they say he comes down at midnight to be fed.

Wellow is full of rhymes. This was an old one when I was a lad.



## LISTEN TO THE COUNTRY

At the top of the town the row begins.  
Pincher Walker broke his shins,  
Edward Hind has got the gout,  
And Bullfrog Marshall's far too stout,  
Matthew Cocking's all leg and stocking,  
Old Dick Hart's the boy to sing  
While Dickie Moore drinks his bottle of gin.  
Old Joe Frisely deals in cattle,  
And Carrier Jackson goes out with a rattle.  
His good little mare called Musick  
Which is one of the best  
Is entitled to have a jolly good rest.  
John Weightman both tall and slender,  
And Abraham Newton joiner and mender.  
John Woolhouse keeps the school  
Which stands upon the old Cuck-stool.  
The farmers they have given over brewing,  
And the old chair factory's gone to ruin.  
Snuffy Gill can play the fiddle,  
While William Conghill's all of a giggle.  
George Liniker he sells fish,  
You can go and buy as much as you wish.  
Old Joe Birkhead makes our clothes.  
If he doesn't get paid then everyone knows.  
James Crofts he keeps the Red Lion,  
And Boxer Hardy lives on Mount Zion.  
William Kitchen keeps the Black Horse Inn :  
You can get any amount of whiskey or gin.  
So top of the town the row begins  
It ends at the bottom with drinking gins.

*Mais :* Well, there's old Wellow, the Wellow of the dukeries, rollicking, poaching, isolated, independent, with happy, sturdy farmers and maypole dancers, the Wellow of a great tradition.

But, as I told you at the beginning, this village is on the very fringe of Sherwood Forest, and that, scenically, is its greatest asset. I don't know how you visualize the Dukeries, but however you imagine them the fact is that there is nothing in the least like them anywhere else in England.

Here are some three or four palaces dotted about at intervals in the very heart of the forest, each with an immense deer park, partly of open turf and bracken, partly of great masses of ancient trees, here a three-mile avenue of limes to the Duke of Newcastle's house, here a mighty avenue of twisted chestnuts, here an army of venerable hollow oak trees all forked like lightning at the top, described by Washington Irving as "mouldering towers", and here a half-mile avenue of great beeches at Thoresby that even in winter entirely hide the sky. There are chains of lakes running through the forest culminating in the great lake of the Duke of Portland at Welbeck, where Canadian geese and the great crested grebe are often seen. And everywhere there are green rides where horsemen and foot-people are encouraged and motorists are not.

Even in mid-winter there is beauty enough and colour enough and to spare in the slender silver birches, in the brown bracken among the snow, in the green mistletoe in the blackthorn, and the bright green lichen and dark-green rhododendrons everywhere.

And though I failed to see Robin Hood in scarlet and his men in Lincoln green, I saw the dappled and pure white deer, and the pink coats of the Rufford Hunt this morning as they ran their fox through Morris Dancers' Plantation and again at sunset this afternoon as they crossed the village green, just outside this window on their way back to kennels.

Sherwood Forest is a place of superb beauty. It is wild, it is enormous—twenty-five miles by ten—it is nearly everywhere free for man to roam. But on turning a corner in the woods last night I found myself quite suddenly facing a smoking, ill-smelling mountainous slag-heap, a colliery in the centre of the forest.

They have already bored for oil within a mile or two of Wellow.

Does the break-up of Rufford mean that at some future date the dukeries will all become collieries? Everyone who lives here and anyone who has walked or ridden in Sherwood Forest devoutly hopes not.

What I should like to see would be the conversion ultimately of the whole of this forest into a national park, so that the pitmen and all other workers in this huge industrial area, who are just as sensitive to beauty as anybody else, should have free access to these enchanted woods. For man requires not only a place to work in, which may have to be ugly, but also a place to play in, which should certainly be quiet, roomy, and beautiful.

This sector of the Midlands needs a green belt to be preserved for ever just as badly as London, and Sherwood Forest is exactly the place for it.

All round Wellow there are pits, and there will certainly be more. They are never objects of beauty and they make any countryside look ugly—but we realize their necessity. And there are still plenty of people who view the arrival of miners in their midst with a good deal of apprehension.

Most of us like farmers because most of us are sprung from farming stock and in our hearts would rather live on a farm than anywhere else.

Very few of us know much about miners, and certainly would not relish a life spent about fifteen hundred or two thousand feet underground, in constant danger, hacking at the coal-face with a coal-cutter. I have always found the miner sturdy, independent and a grand companion, and he actually likes going down the pit.

Here's one of them, Mr. Revitt. He's not a Wellow man. He was born in Yorkshire, and after twenty years in

the pits came out in the strike of 1926 and became an insurance agent.

*Mais* : So you were as happy in the old days underground as you are now, Mr. Revitt ? Why ?

*Revitt* : The companionship of the other miners made it the finest life in the world. I liked working underground.

*Mais* : And here's Joe Parkin, another type of colliery worker. He works on the surface and is a blacksmith, like Dick. But his job can be as dangerous as if he were below. He's at present on capping, and that's pretty exciting.

*Joe* : It's as dangerous as being below. You may fall sixteen hundred feet down the shaft if you make one slip.

*Mais* : And Dick here, too, began in the pit. Tell us about your pit days, Dick.

*Trueman* : I came out of the army in 1919 and went back to the estate as blacksmith. But as I wanted more money to live on I went to the sinking of Clipstone Pit. We were often working up to the thighs in water. It was much better going when we got through the water, of course, and I worked on till we got to the coal-face. Then came the coal-cutters, and I could see somebody was going to be killed, and I didn't mean it being me, so I went back to the estate and took my tutor's place when he retired. Far better than the pits, and bother the big money, I say.

## THE CHINA-CLAY MINE

### *Introductory*

WHEN MR. TREGURTHA OFFERED ME A PINCH OF CHINA-clay to eat I replied: "Thanks, I prefer snuff."

"It's not half so good for you," he said.

"I'm not Sir Richard Grenville," I answered. "I don't bite the hand that feeds me, and I don't eat the cup that cheers me."

"Ah! That's where you fall into the general error. China-clay is used for other things than china."

"Then you ought to give it a fresh name," I said. "It's misleading." I tentatively put a little on the tip of my tongue.

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "You eat it every day in your toothpaste."

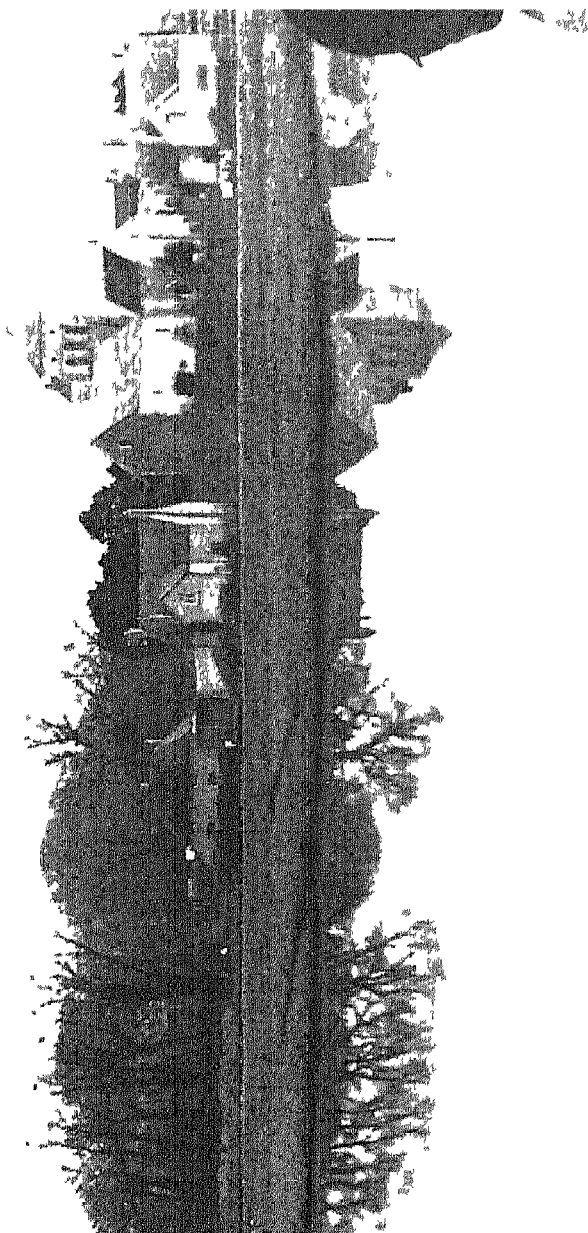
"I don't eat my toothpaste," I replied indignantly.

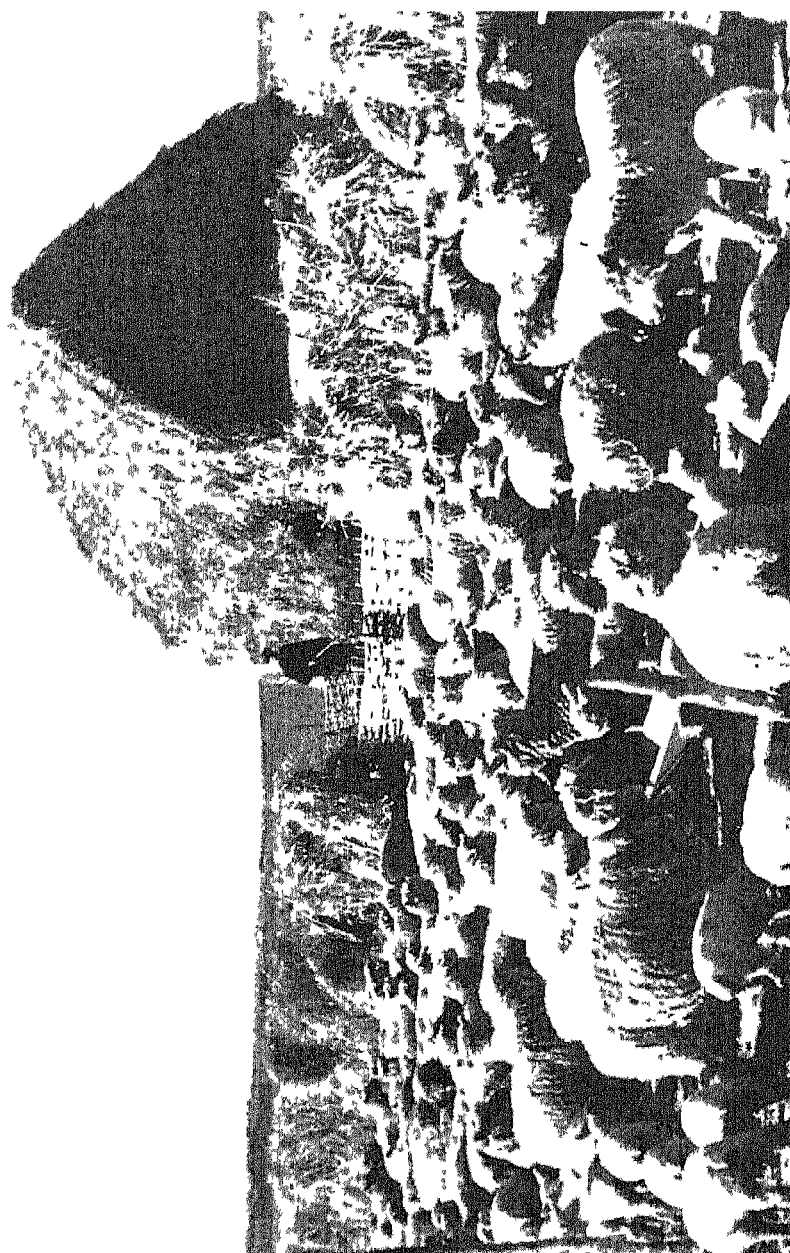
"In your aspirin when you get a hangover."

"I'm not that sort of person," I said.

"Well, you occasionally have your shoes cleaned and your shirts starched. You occasionally use ink, glance at a newspaper, walk on linoleum, admire a wallpaper, scour a sink, scatter insect-killer, buy your wife some face-powder . . . There's china-clay in all these. Face the day with china-clay and you'll never need a doctor."

"Or anything else," I said; "if that list of yours is accurate. I'll just go and carve myself off a cubic yard."





"It's not peat," he said. "It doesn't just lie like clay. You've got to refine it."

"There you go again," I replied. "It's called china-clay because you use it for making paper and patent medicines, and because it isn't clay. What is it?"

"I'll show you," he said. And this is what he showed me.

He took me to a high bleak moor in the heart of Cornwall where in the ordinary way you would see nothing but heather, yellow furze, and grey granite boulders. But something had happened to these moors. There had been an upheaval. There were scores of giant pyramids of dazzling white rising some hundred or two hundred feet above the surface of the moor.

"So that's china-clay," I said.

"No," replied Mr. Tregurtha, "that's the sand-dump, the refuse."

As I drew closer I saw little trucks crawling up their steep sides to deposit sand on the summit and then return into the deep, wide pit whence the china-clay is drawn.

I peered over the edge into the dazzling white, wide crater three hundred feet below, and saw men in white thigh-boots with hose-pipes bombarding the rock-face with water.

"Had a fire?" I asked intelligently.

"No. That's the way we get the china-clay."

"Then what is china-clay?"

"It's a product of the decomposition of felspar of granite. You know those white crystals in granite?"

I nodded. Another illusion gone. I thought granite was indestructible. Yet here it was crumbling under attack by water and being turned into a milky way.

All along the floor of the pit were streams of milk all flowing into vast troughs.

H



"So that's china-clay," I said.

"Only five per cent of that stream," he replied. "The sand sinks to the bottom of those troughs. The milky stream is then pumped up through pipes to these micas and settling-pans."

He showed me a series of wooden trenches through which the white stream was passing on its way to cauldron-like reservoirs where the colour changed to pale green.

"That's the reflection of the sky," he said. "The china-clay is settling at the bottom, like pure white mud."

I watched it flow more thickly out of the bottom of these reservoirs towards the drying-kilns, where it is pressed between thin iron plates, a sort of mangle that squeezes out the last drops of water, and then spread on the top of ovens in the drying-kilns, where it gets scalding hot and is cut into slabs like toffee. After drying into cakes it is shovelled away into trucks to be turned into a face-powder or a cure for rheumatism or a china cup.

#### THE BROADCAST

*Captain Marsh-Arthur* : There's practically nothing china-clay isn't used for. The paper you write on, the wallpaper you look at, every sort of paper ; the cup you drink out of, every sort of china ; the shoe leather you wear, the pencil you write with, the shirt you've got on, the soap, the paint on your car, the sunburn lotion, the dance-floor polish ; the cures you take for rheumatism, headache, and hangovers—all these probably have china-clay in them.

Try a pinch.

*Mais* : Sure it won't poison me ? Thanks. Well, it doesn't smell. It doesn't taste at all. It looks harmless. It's just pure white, dazzlingly white. So that's why china-clay workers are so fit and live so long. I didn't know that until I paid a special visit to the pits, and it was then that Captain Arthur gave me that first pinch. I understand now why the moor ponies always make a bee-line for china-clay water when they want a drink in preference to the water that is free of it. It looks like milk, and, like milk, it does you good. I've known Cornwall pretty intimately all my life, but until this visit I had always given the china-clay dumps a wide berth.

Not that I agree with those who call them an eyesore. I hold no brief for refuse-dumps of slag, but I have seen these shining pyramids rising out of a low-lying mist looking like the sails of yachts bellying in the wind down the Solent. I have seen them as I came over the Bodmin Moors silhouetted against the sunset looking like giant wigwams, very eerie and very beautiful. And I got a corroboration yesterday from that excellent artist Lamorna Birch, who said he had seen them look as majestic as the Alps. With one or two exceptions they are all clustered together on Hensbarrow and Longstone Downs on the high granite moors above St. Austell, occupying a more or less circular area of about eight to ten miles in diameter with the villages of St. Stephen-in-Branwell, St. Dennis, Roche, and Bugle on the rim, and St. Austell as the clay-capital, "Clayopolis".

These villages are irregular clusters of greystone cottages built more or less haphazard on the moor-side, with little stone-wall enclosures where the thrifty clay-workers keep a pig or a cow or poultry on very poor soil. They pay about £7 or £8 a year in rent.

There is a lot of furze about, not only in the rough

fields but growing up the sides of the deserted sand-dumps which rise in pyramids from the top of the pits for about 150 to 300 feet. Where the pits have been worked out there is now a sky-coloured lake of flood-water below the refuse-sand. There are 150 pits in thirty square miles, and most of the pits are about ten to twenty acres in area and from 150 to 300 feet deep. I've got Mr. Davies, the managing director of one of the largest china-clay companies here, and he'll tell you about its beginning.

*Davies :* The first man to discover china-clay in England was a Plymouth Quaker, William Cookworthy, and that was in 1750.

*Mais :* Why is it called Kaolin ?

*Davies :* It's Chinese, as you may have guessed, a composition of Kao-ling, or the White Ridge, the hill where the earliest samples of the clay were discovered by a French Jesuit missionary to China in the early eighteenth century.

*Mais :* What exactly do you say it is ?

*Davies :* You have seen those patches of white in granite—the crystals of felspar ? It's decomposed felspar. We have to separate it from the coarse quartz and mica.

*Mais :* I never suspected before that granite could be milked like a cow. What are its special properties ?

*Davies :* In the making of china it has the property of absorbing moisture readily and of being easily moulded when wet. In the pottery-ovens it fires very white. In the human body it collects all the toxic poisons and juices and clears them out of the system. There are two to three hundred different qualities from a clearest white down to deep yellow. China-clay is used for bleaching as well as paper and pottery.

*Mais :* How much china-clay is produced in a year ?

*Davies* : Last year nearly a million tons. Cornwall and Devon are easily the most important sources. It is shipped mainly from Fowey, Par, Charlestown, Padstow, and Plymouth to the Continent and the United States, and taken by rail or canal to the potteries. It is not generally realized what the production of a million tons of china-clay means. Take just a few items : to produce a million tons of clay involves removing a million tons of earth, known as "overburden", three to four million tons of quartz sand and a million tons of rock known as "stent", and the pumping of thirty million tons or 7,200,000,000 gallons of clay water an average height of two hundred feet. The sand and stent have to be raised about four hundred feet in height. To do this involves a consumption of about thirty million units of electricity ; the consumption of about 120,000 tons of coal.

Ninety-five per cent of the clay is shipped at local ports, about one-third goes to coasting ports, and two-thirds foreign, so that it means an important industry for shipping and export.

The industry employs directly about 4500 to 5000 men, according to the demand for clay, besides the stevedores at the local ports, over a hundred lorries and the men on the minerals-line of the Great Western Railway.

*Mais* : On my visit to the pits I was taken under the charge of Captain Marsh-Arthur. Each pit has its own captain, who is responsible for the men's safety and output, and fixes with them the rate at which they will work. Most of them like working by the piece ; if you're thrifty and hard-working it pays.

I noticed at once that the clay in the pits varies in shades of whiteness as much as the pits vary in width and depth. Their names, as one would expect in Cornwall, are as picturesque and strange as their appearance. Here are a

few that I saw: Trethosa, Burgotha, Little Treviscoe, Wheelhenfry, North Carloggas, Hendra, Melbur, Dubbers, and Carrancarrow.

All the way along I kept on meeting men on bicycles looking astonishingly clean and white. China-clay is not only the healthiest, it is also the whitest industry. The pitmen look like millers. It is also the quietest. What a refreshing joy to find an industry that doesn't deafen you. The only noise is a pleasant one, that of running water and a hose playing on rock. We kept passing under vast pyramids of sand-dumps, and every now and again I peered over the edge of this pit and that.

I saw men walking on every level and at every angle, some of them roped, carrying pick and bar. The seam works very irregularly, so that there appears to be no method in the way they cut into the pit, and each pit looks like a well-hacked, exceptionally white Stilton cheese.

Then I went down into the pit at Dorothy, and this meant walking single file down a zigzag track into the bed of the pit three hundred feet below the surface. I was just taking stock of the broom and ragged robin growing on the worked-out seams when I heard a warning-bell and saw men moving in to cover. We had just reached our shed when the explosion took place.

I don't like explosions, but this was only a quiet one, not enough to stop up the ears for.

*Arthur* : There wasn't much rock in that explosion, and no danger. We insist on men taking cover for every sort of blasting to remove all possibility of danger.

*Mais* : Yes, I can see the necessity for that. The first thing that I noticed was a succession of truck-loads of granite going up a steep, railed incline and empties coming down. The next thing I saw was a man in a far corner of

the pit in white thigh-boots with a hose-pipe playing on the rock above, and a milk-white stream flowing from under his feet into a long, rectangular reservoir in the centre of the pit's floor. It looked like watered milk to me. There were other men at various heights in the pit hacking away the rock with chisel-pointed picks——

*Arthur* : They're called "Dubbers".

*Mais* : . . . from the place where the rock had been blasted, while another man below stood hosing away, like a dentist washing out a hollow tooth before drilling.

When we got to the surface again the captain took me to Little Treviscoe to see the mica-drags.

*Arthur* : Mica-drags are long channels or trenches of wood with deep drags for settling the coarse mica and fine screens at the far end to keep other vegetable impurities from going on in the stream which then flows into three settling-pits.

*Mais* : They were vast cauldrons about twenty feet across. The colour of the liquid there was a glorious pale green.

*Arthur* : It depends on the sky. It's usually deep blue. They're about twenty-five feet deep.

*Mais* : I picked up a long-handled wooden rake called a "shiver", and Mr. Davies told me what to do with it, and found by stirring at the bottom that the clay was now getting thicker, about as thick as pure white mud.

*Davies* : "Shivers" draw off the settled clay at the bottom when it is so thick that it will only just flow. It's like cream cheese. The water at the top goes back on its never-ending round to the pit to bring up more clay. Then the clay is piped five or six miles before it reaches the drying-kilns.

There are tanks immediately behind the kilns, where the clay is now settled to a consistency of clay and water, half

and half, a sort of putty or dough thickness. It is then scooped into tram-wagons on to a travelling bridge.

*Mais* : Yes, I saw that, and then went off to see the filter-presses, a sort of mangle that squeezes the clay dry. It has a fairly trying time, first picking up water and then shedding it again to purify it.

I then went into the hot drying-kilns, a long shed. How long is that shed, Mr. Davies ?

*Davies* : About four hundred feet long.

*Mais* : It had a furnace underneath one end and flues running throughout the length. On the floor of the drying-pan I saw masses of very hot cakes of the wet clay, cut into toffee-like squares. It shrinks, of course, during drying. It takes from twenty-four hours to three days to dry. There were men in white caps and aprons shovelling away the dried cakes of clay on to the small trucks behind them to the storage-shed behind. It was now ready for shipment.

*Davies* : It is mainly shipped in bulk. About 130,000 tons of it goes to America every year.

*Arthur* : Then you saw the men stop work and settle down to billy-cans of tea and Cornish pasty or home-made currant buns. It was ten o'clock, when they have a break of twenty minutes, known as "crib".

*Mais* : As you've butted in, Captain Marsh-Arthur, perhaps you'd go on to say a word or two about the various improvements in your time. After all, Cornwall has a reputation for inventiveness second to none. Think of Richard Trevithick and Humphry Davy.

*Arthur* : Yes, sir, a Cornishman need never be ashamed of the "pit from whence he was dug". "Cousin Jack", as the Cornish miner is called, is known the world over, where there is a hole dug in the ground, as an intelligent, industrious, adaptable miner, mechanic, engineer or pumpman.

My father and brothers were pitmen-miners, father dying when I was six, and being number twelve in a family of a "baker's dozen", I had early to become a wage-earner.

After some years alternately quarrying and clay-working, I became second pitman to my brother, Jim Arthur, who put in fifty years as head pitman. During the twelve years I was with him we fixed and repaired scores of all kinds of then known pumps in and around the various clay-pits and china stone-quarries owned by our firm, sometimes being lent to other firms. I'm afraid you wouldn't understand about the pumps, Mr. Mais, and that's not the only thing. There's terrific changes all round.

The evolution from landing-sand, blondin-tub, ground-pit and now the patent sand-pit, the change from the wheelbarrow to the derrick-tip for tipping, steam grabs and navvies, dredger-buckets, the patent sand-pit, expert sand-man, automatic skip-tipper, flying-tip, and fast winder show the sort of way we keep on improving.

*Mais :* They're all too advanced for me. That's progress. The tin-miner and coal-miner both undergo considerable dangers to provide tin and coal. I suppose the dangerous side of your job was flooding in the levels in the old days.

*Arthur :* I once fell down a hundred-foot shaft into eighty feet of water. I can still remember that sinking feeling when I struck the water, but as I could swim I got off with nothing worse than a thorough "ducking".

Another time I was in a shaft when a seven-inch pump weighing seven hundredweight came crashing down, breaking the stage-plank on which my partner was standing, leaving him clinging to a hanging bolt. This happened owing to the slipping of the winch-chain, and I expected the twenty fathoms of chain to catch around my neck and pull me off from the kibble-casing, where I clung into the water



below. I had seen a man's head split open a short while before in a similar accident.

I have stood on a single plank up to the waist in water in mid-winter, with fifteen fathoms of water under the loose-plank, in order to make a joint between the top and bottom parts of a bucket-lift when a central pump had burst and needed replacing.

Many a shaftman and shift-boss have had a similar experience while changing valves or clearing chips, and no pumpman worthy of the name would mind staying until the water reached his chin if thereby he could stop the lift from being "lost" and prevent the pit from becoming flooded.

*Mais* : Do you ever have any fatal accidents by flooding ?

*Arthur* : I once had a couple of miners who only missed being trapped in a level by a couple of minutes, a sudden rush of water completely filling the level and rising several fathoms up the shaft just as their shift ended. Another time a sudden cloudburst swelled the waterwheel leat so that it broke in over a shaft where men were repairing ; but prompt measures saved the situation, or the men would never have come up alive.

I once had rather a peculiar experience while sinking a trial pit in a clay bottom in order to find if the clay went down or not. We were working three shifts about because of the amount of water we had cut. In miners' phrase, "it was more than a barrel of water to a kibble of muck, with clay soft enough to split". We had reached a depth of about fifty feet. The style of timbering was what we call cupboard-binding—it was really a box five feet by three feet. I had just put in a couple of laths and end-pieces forming the sett ; it might have taken five minutes to trim the corners and jam it into position. The water, meanwhile, nearly reached the top of my knee-boots, so I shouted for the

windlass-man to lower the barrel to clear out the water before commencing digging to place another sett. Nothing happened, however, and on looking up I could just see him holding tight the handle of the windlass, his face the colour of chalk. I shouted at intervals for about ten minutes—it seemed longer to me—and I made a little platform with pick, shovel, and bar to keep ahead of the rising water, still staring upwards, wondering if the fellow would collapse entirely and fall down on me. At last I saw him begin to move and rub his hand across his forehead, so I shouted again, and believe me, he looked everywhere before he looked down the shaft, then he said, "Who's down there?" I replied, "You know who's down here, why, Marsh-Arthur." He replied, "I don't know you, never heard your name before in my life." It struck me as funny that the man who had worked with me for over a week, and during the shift, had constantly been shouting, "Purty lot of water down there, Marsh," now did not know me, had never even heard my name before. I laughed and fell off the ledge I'd made and filled my boots with water. However, he pulled me up and I had another man after "crib" and completed the shift. I found out afterwards that the first windlass-man was subject to epileptic fits.

*Mais* : That reminds me of stories that Captain Daniel Bassett told us. He's ninety-one, and when we went to see him we interrupted him writing a letter, do you remember ?

*Arthur* : Ay, I remember.

*Mais* : And he put down his pen as we walked in and said briskly as any newspaper lord, "I can give you just ten minutes—then I have to catch the post." What an advertisement for the industry he was. Hands steady as a rock, his handwriting as clear as any high school girl's. He wore no spectacles to write with, he heard perfectly and spoke per-

fectly, and showed no sign of being tired after ten minutes of brisk recollections of the 1850's. Captain Bassett had seen some flooding in his time, and so had the husband of the couple who gave us such a grand tea in their cottage at Bugle ; their united years came to a hundred and sixty-three, and neither of them had had a day's illness in their lives. There they were, he digging up the potatoes, and she spring-cleaning, though their house didn't look as if it wanted spring-cleaning. They certainly know how to keep healthy, wealthy, and wise enough not to fret at not being millionaires. The children are all red-faced, smiling, bright-eyed, and intelligent, very neat in their clothes and tidy in their habits.

After work I went off to see how the young men spent their leisure and in the evening accepted Jack Mannell's invitation to have a game of skittles in the alley close by the church of St. Stephen-in-Branwell. The ringers were practising their peals as I arrived, and two of Jack's pals were in the meadow behind the inn stripped for wrestling, or "wrestling", as they call it. Each wore singlets and a loose khaki-coloured tough whipcord wrestler's coat, the end of which they tucked under their left arm before grappling with each other.

I've got Jack Mannell here with me, and he can explain to you better than I can the ethics of Cornish wrestling. If one knee touches the ground, you "break grip", don't you, Jack ?

*Mannell* : That's right ; the rules are fairly simple, the idea is to get a hold on your opponent and throw him to the ground. The bout is won when one wrestler throws the other so that his two shoulders and one hip, or two hips and one shoulder touch the ground at the same time. Each wrestler has to stand on his legs ; if one knee touches the ground they have to break their hitch or grip, and start

again. If a wrestler just knows two of the holds he can throw opponents who are bigger and stronger but less skilful than he. There are lots of different holds and throws ; here are just a few : foreheap, heel and toe throws, crook, back step, and flying mare.

Old wrestlers are chosen for referees or "sticklers", as they are called.

*Mais* : But it's skittles that most interests Jack. I've never seen such an enthusiast. He took me to a long shed and put into my hand a seventeen-pound wooden ball and then gave me precise instructions where to aim and what to do. He was so good a master and I was so apt a pupil that I had beginner's luck and knocked all the ninepins down, but only once. When we came to play seriously, Jack hurled himself violently forward on his two hands after delivering the ball and never once failed to frighten the ninepins to fall. Tell listeners, Jack, the rules for your skittle alley.

*Mannell* : The game of skittles used to be called "kales". At one end of the alley is a wooden frame with nine cigar-shaped wooden pins about a foot high and weighing from seven to nine pounds set up in it. At the other end of the alley, twenty-one feet away from the nearest pin, stands the player with a wooden ball which he throws at the pins. The pins are set up in the form of a square, with one corner towards the player, and what you have to do is to knock down all the pins in as few throws as possible. The ball weighs from fourteen to seventeen pounds. You've got to have two or four players to play this game. If you're any good you can often knock down all nine pins at one throw. This is called a "floor". If the pins are knocked down in two throws it's a "shove" or "double". You score by "rushes", one being chalked to the best of two players each turn, the side that gets four "rushes" first wins the game.

As you saw, sir, it's a jolly exciting game, keeps you hot in the winter and great fun when you get evenly matched sides. Hard work, perhaps, to some, sir ; but to the clay-worker—easy.

*Mais* : One other thing. They're tremendously keen on music as well. The St. Dennis Silver Band has been eleven times West of England champions. I've got here the chief cornet player of the St. Dennis's Silver Band, and to finish up with, to give you a taste of their quality, Maurice is going to give you a tune—"Trelawny". You'll think it's the tune "The Grand Old Duke of York", but you'll be wrong. It's "Trelawny".

And now, Jack, tell us something about your other sports. What about cricket and football ?

*Mannell* : A lot of clay-workers are very keen sportsmen, every little village has its own football and cricket teams, mostly comprised of the men and boys that work in and around the clay pits. Tug-o'-war was a very great attraction last year, at one meeting no less than twenty-six teams, or two hundred and eight men competed. Every man competing was a good old honest clay-worker. Darts are rapidly becoming very popular too. A great number of the "boys" are buying dart-boards and practising every minute they get a chance—lots of challenges throwing around soon.

*Mais* : A lot of villages have started tabletennis, and teams are being picked. Although in its infancy, very keen rivalry already exists.

Whether in work or play these china-clay workers are thorough. That comes, I expect, from their good health—and is a proof, if ever one was needed, what an immense difference it makes working at a congenial job.

## THE CRICKET WEEK

IT WAS OUR IRISH EX-CHAIRMAN WHO FIRST HAD THE temerity to propose that we should hold a cricket week.

It seemed at the time a preposterous suggestion, and met with a good deal of opposition when he raised the point in committee. It was pointed out that we should get no support, that we should lose money that we hadn't got, that it would be impossible to raise an eleven who could get off work in mid-week, and that it would probably rain.

Last year was our first year. It didn't rain. We got good crowds, and had so little difficulty in raising a team that there was even a grievance on the part of the second eleven that they were not given a show.

Then we were told that it was dangerous to repeat a triumph, that it was the novelty and audacity of the idea that carried it to success last year, and that it might rain this year.

Well, the week is just over, and I'd like to tell you about it.

In the first place, it didn't rain.

For six consecutive days the sun shone out of a cloudless sky on a green that was kept deliciously cool by a slight southerly breeze off the sea.

The week began, for me, with a slight feeling of disappointment. As the eleventh man of the second eleven, I was not, of course, selected to play in the opening match, which was against the Civil Service ; but as president of the club I felt it my duty to be present at the start, so I hurried

back from Blackpool on the only available Sunday train, and so missed the burning down of the pavilion on the north pier by half an hour. Had I stayed that extra half-hour I should have achieved a remarkable hat-trick, for three piers in English coast towns have been burnt down in recent years, all on a Sunday, and I was present at both the earlier conflagrations.

A pier blazing merrily on a sunny Sunday afternoon is a fine sight to watch, and I felt somehow cheated as I wandered round the village green at noon on the Monday morning, to find the game not started. Was it for this that I had raced across England on the hottest day of summer? I was a little mollified by the approach of one of the boys from the council school with pencil and a dirty scrap of paper. I explained gently that the fact that I was dressed as if for cricket did not mean that I was playing. When I regret aloud my inability to play cricket, I am nearly always comforted by the assurance of my wife that even if I can't play cricket I *look* every inch a cricketer. I wear my aged green cap with an air that deceives the other side into stepping a little back when I face the bowling for the first ball. It is only after the first ball, if I survive it, that they come crowding in to the very edge of the bat.

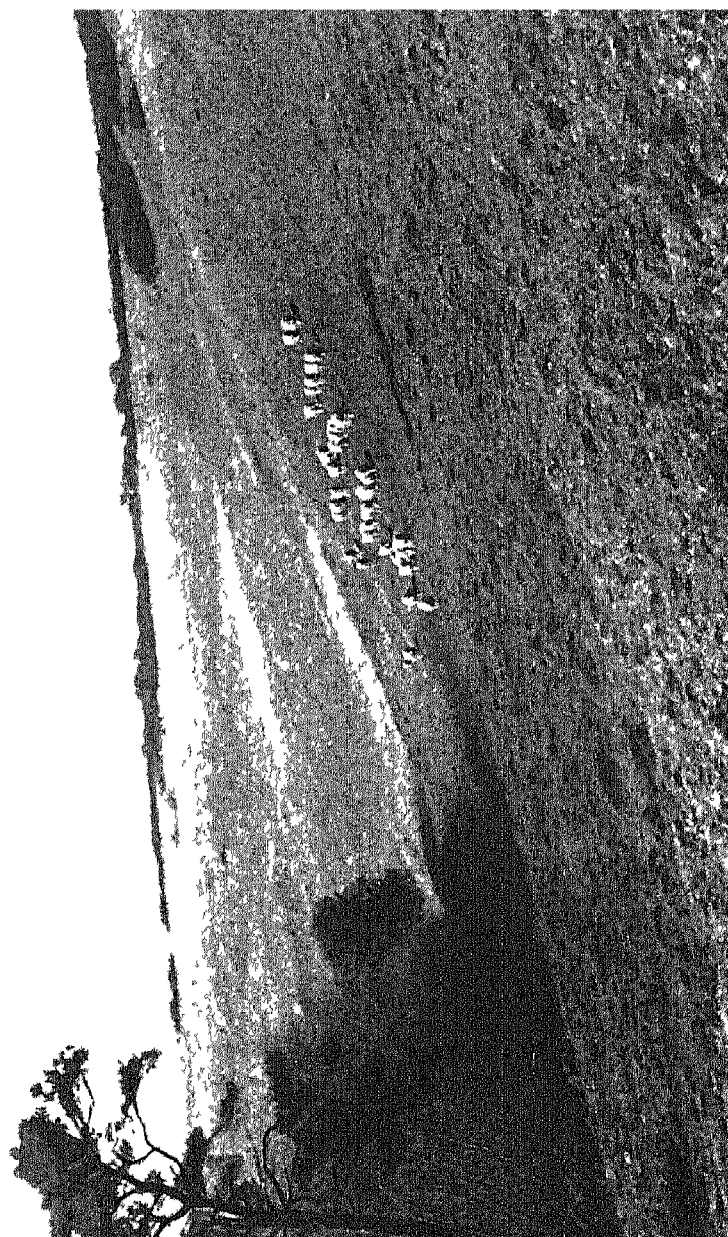
So as I walked round the green to see that all was in order, a number of strangers turned to regard my "Centipedes" blazer and Southwick cap with interest.

Even if the cricket was late in starting, in me they saw promise of prolific slogging and swift bowling to come.

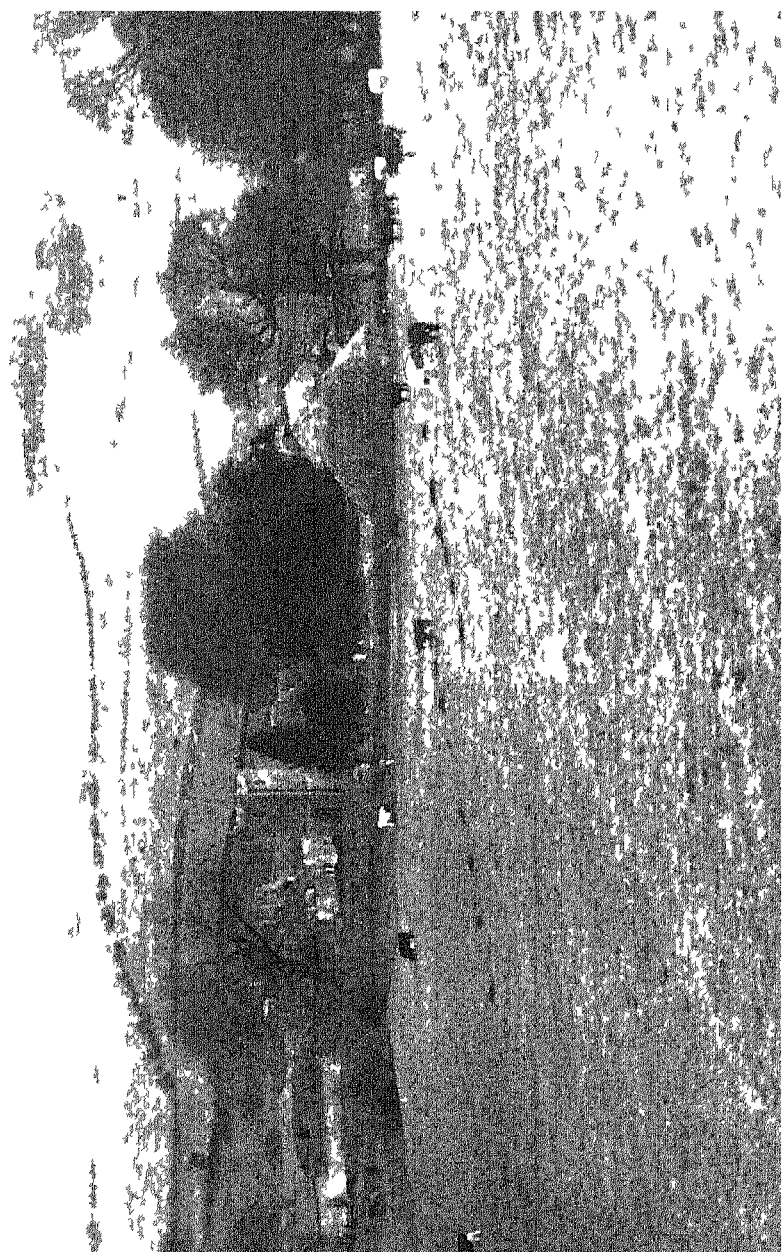
I have never been able to understand why our cricket matches are advertised to start at 11.30 or 2.30, because they never do. This lateness in starting is the only fault I have to find with the cricket of this week.

When the Civil Service began they began well. They

*Tess's "Flintcomb Ash". Downs above Plush, Dorset*







put on 150 for no wicket before lunch, a cold collation taken at the "Cricketers' Arms", where I performed the double function of saying grace and supplying the first round of drinks. Conversation ran mainly on club cricket and was a little grim. It lacked the genial, carefree spirit of Sir Noel Curtis-Bennett, who captained the Civil Service side by proxy. His absence was explained by an urgent call to a ministry. I thought sadly of the blazing pier at Blackpool.

The village was in the end soundly beaten, the Civil Service declaring at 293 for 7 and getting us out for 176.

The cricket was lively, and the crowd of motorists, old men on the benches, young men on the rails, girls in deck-chairs, errand-boys on bikes, and children sprawling all over the grass showed, partly by their numbers and partly by the two guineas that they put into the collecting-box, their appreciation of the play.

How people manage to get off work whenever there is cricket to watch I don't pretend to be able to explain, but for the whole of the week those railings were crowded.

I had taken immense trouble to leave this one week of the year quite free, and it had entailed a tremendous amount of juggling and readjustment of work. And, in spite of it, as you will see, an attempt was made very early to rob me of this hard-won freedom.

Anyway, on the first day we had no cause for complaint. We had been honoured by a visit from a very strong team, and the defeat we suffered, though severe, was not hollow or dishonourable.

The teams relaxed together over beer, sandwiches, and darts after the serious business of the day, and both sides went home well content.

The second day was my day. I had been invited to raise an eleven against the village second eleven.

That sounds easy. It took me six months and something over a hundred letters.

Among those who at one time or another had sworn to play for me were Maurice Tate, C. B. Fry, A. G. Daer, Sir Aubrey Smith, A. D. Peters, Howard Marshall, Alec Waugh, Eric Maschwitz, Val Gielgud, N. V. C. Turner, Dr. A. J. Cronin, and Joe Stannard. Indeed, that would have made an admirable team and would have given the village second eleven a good game.

Telegrams of regret were showered on me as I arrived on the green, full early, in new "Daks" trousers, and everything clean and handsome about me.

I had warned the second eleven that I was going to start at 11.30, and on the tick of 11.30 I had just three men on my side. These were: a man whom I had told not to come; Christopher Stone, who told me that he hadn't held a bat for twenty-five years; and Hugh de Selincourt, who I am sure kept on adding to his age to each inquirer, for "Seventy!" was the whisper I heard go up as someone left him, and that was not, I am sure, the score that he expected to make.

Anyway, we won the toss and I decided to bat with these three men. Telegrams of apology for not being able to get away, and more telegrams from people who were on the way but had broken down, had been held up, and had met with accidents, continued to pour in. I implored Christopher Stone and de Selincourt to hold out as long as they could. I was a little too bothered watching all the approaches for signs of likely cricketers to appreciate the fact that Christopher's method of holding out was to score forty-five in faultlessly effortless style. The story about his having hit W. G. Grace out of the ground for six assumed a likelier hue when I watched his second six narrowly miss a cottage

window, bring down two tiles from a roof, and ricochet neatly into the stomach of an old man walking down the lane.

Then my team gradually dribbled in. It wasn't at all the team that I had invited or ordered. They were all substitutes. They knew neither me, their captain, nor each other. They hadn't the slightest idea who they were playing for or against.

I rushed out into the road as each oncoming car drove up, damned its bewildered occupants for being late, drove them into the little disused church school to change and curtly told them to put their pads on. There was hardly time to write their names in the score-book. Then a bevy of real beauties settled down with accompanying Corgis, Bedlington, and other pets in deck-chairs and on rugs, and the whole green assumed an air of country-house cricket that was altogether delightful.

I talked to one exceptionally lovely young thing with gold hair that scintillated in the sun like a bag of sovereigns, and discussed very candidly with her the batting of one of my strange players, only to learn that he was her husband and that she was quite in the dark as to what county she was in.

"This is the sort of cricket I like," she said. "Nobody knows where we are or who is on what side."

She regarded me more intently.

"Are you playing or just watching?" she asked innocently.

She was so easy to talk to that I recapitulated to her all my own life history and that of the club. After all, she didn't have to listen.

In the meanwhile, a very modest youngster who didn't look at all well had knocked up fifty with as little effort as Christopher Stone.

The luncheon interval saw 150 on the board and six of my men gone.

Luncheon at the "Cricketers' Arms" enabled me to get a few of the names of my guests right, and also enabled me to sit between two of the fairest of our visitors' companions.

I had not realized before how admirable an institution a cricket luncheon is. It encourages that mixing which is so essential to the success of any sporting function.

It also gave me the courage to score eleven runs, my highest for the season, and we were all out for the creditable total of 200.

The village second eleven, to which I belong, is nothing if not spirited in defence. It can always be relied upon to rise to an occasion, and on this occasion it rose nobly. I have seen the whole side dismissed for less than ten runs by an inferior village second eleven.

On this bright Tuesday afternoon it ran us to within fifteen of our score against really good bowling. "The bowling was too good," explained the chairman.

And when I wanted to put them in again they would have none of it. They would get us out again, and they did, this time for 182.

567 runs were scored on the green in that one day's game.

So the sitters on the fence who contributed another £2 7s. may be said to have got their money's worth. I certainly did. It was the first time in all my fifty-three years that I have captained a cricket side, and I celebrated it by giving both sides a supper at the "Cricketers Arms", which cost me £7 10s. in food and £2 10s. in drinks, and ended in an orgy of songs, recitations, stories, and speeches.

I have never seen forty people mix in so well together in my life. How we rose to be forty at supper I don't know. It only shows how popular cricket is among the fair.

It is the only occasion I can remember in which everybody got up and did a turn with perfect good humour, ladies included.

In the middle of the feast the following telegram arrived for me :

*Olympiade Film Company, Berlin, asks whether you can go to Berlin tomorrow or day after for two days. Urgent. Request can you please let me know by wire whether yes or no. Rudolph, German Embassy, London.*

Without knowing in the least what it was all about, and disliking this cutting into my one week of cricket, I replied :

*Yes, if I can bring my wife . . .*

—and the festivities continued.

On the Wednesday we returned to the first eleven and serious cricket, for the Sussex Club and Ground match. We feel it a great honour for the Club and Ground to play us at all, but on this day we trounced them severely, getting them out for 129 and making 208 for 9 wickets. The fielding of the village team was quite remarkable, and you can gauge the interest aroused from the fact that the collecting-box brought in £4. The fact that Wednesday is early closing day was a help. We spent that night dancing in the Y.M.C.A. hut.

On Thursday I was playing once more against the village, and had the extraordinary good luck to make nineteen before putting my inside leg in front of the wicket.

This was a very exciting game, as in reply to our total of 154, the village had made 148 for 8 when time was called,

and, of course, we went on playing and I misfielded the winning hit.

This, I find, is typical of cricket. I make runs and I can't bat. My whole reputation rests on my fielding, and I let one through when it's crucial.

A reply from Germany came agreeing to my wife accompanying me, and wanting to know the time of my arrival.

I again wired to know what I was wanted for and what fee they intended to pay, and received the following reply from Berlin :

*From Friday morning to Monday evening fee 50 pounds and 25 mark each day end plan tiket payed in Berlin after the conditions of the devisen expacting immediat answer regarding arrivil olympian Film Berlin Harzer str 39.*

Nobody on the village green knew the meaning of the word *devisen*. The German maid next door said first that it meant "two and a half" and then "stamp". I still was quite in the dark as to my mission.

I rang up Fred Bate of the N.B.C. He said that Hitler had been advised to get English broadcasters over to tell the German commentators on the Olympic Games film how to do their stuff and that Howard Marshall had already been over. I rang up Howard Marshall, and he told me that he had been over for four weeks, and pointed out the necessity of being paid over here beforehand, as foreigners are not allowed to take money out of Germany, so I sent a night telegram saying that on receipt of the money I would start at once, and went on playing cricket.

The next day, Friday, we encountered the Hove police. I was for the first time in the week playing for the first eleven. I made a duck and we lost by 5 runs. They made 107 to our

102. In the second innings I was put on to bowl, and took 6 wickets. The incongruity of cricket.

For the whole of the week everyone in flannels had been badgered for his autograph by the small boys of the school, who were continually "shooed" from the little roped-off enclosure by the war memorial where the tent had been pitched, tea served, and deck-chairs set out, but they swarmed back again and buzzed round like flies, and became so troublesome that I appealed to the headmaster.

The children at last left the enclosure undisturbed.

Saturday was given up to the second eleven, and unluckily the opposing team, the Old Boys of Worthing High School, though slim and likely looking, had very little cricket in them. They got us out for 102, of which I made 6 and ran a man out by failing to run for a ball that I hit high in the air. We got them out for 20. I dropped two catches.

The week was over, and it was with sad hearts that I took down the flags and the side-screens, and the tent.

But there was still a day of cricket to come. As a village we do not countenance Sunday cricket, but the club were willing to lend their gear and eleven of their members to me to take a team to Ardingly to play Sir Reginald Blaker's team. So for the second time in a week and my life I was captain.

It was our first Sunday game, and made a memorable finish to a grand week. We started by train at 9.49, one playing member and two camp followers being left behind on the platform. They caught us up at Hayward's Heath, where we waited for them in the bus which we had specially hired. By 11.30 we had arrived at Knowle, Sir Reginald's country house, placed high on a wooded ridge overlooking the weald and the whole line of the South Downs.

He had converted a rough meadow into an absolutely level cricket ground, with cows in a meadow on one side and



lily ponds and herbaceous borders at their flaming best on the other.

There was also a summer-house with a barrel of beer in it, to which we were invited whenever we felt the need.

We won the toss and, against my judgment, I accepted the verdict of the majority and put the other side, each of whom wore a yellow duck on his sweater, in to bat.

The policy seemed to be justified, as I had 10 of them out before lunch for 39. We were playing 12 a side. They carried the score to 53, and we replied by losing 5 wickets for 10. However, we recovered and made 73. I went in last, and was bowled first ball.

In their second innings they made 103, leaving us to get 84 to win.

Again our leaders collapsed, and when I went in last (we played on beyond the agreed time to finish it) we still needed 12 to win. We got two of them when the man at the other end was caught, and so we were beaten after a golden day's cricket by 9 or 10 runs.

It was a glorious finish to an unforgettable week.

I had not even allowed Germany to spoil my fun.

One of the boys in the village had taken his annual holiday during that week, preferring to spend it playing cricket every day on his own green to going away to the usual seaside resort. I think he was right.

For if I, who in eight innings during the week only managed to compile forty runs, dropped three catches and ran a man out, enjoyed every moment of it so tremendously, how much more enjoyable must it have been to the real cricketers with their fifties and their five or ten or twenty wickets.

For me it is the best sort of holiday in the world for, from the time that the first ball is bowled in the morning to

the final drawing of stumps at night, I find myself completely translated to another world. I take over work to do in my bicycle-basket. I never once give it a second's thought. I watch each ball in a rising frenzy of apprehension. I try on several lots of pads and gloves and flourish my bat to give myself confidence.

I try and get on my toes in the field for every ball, only to misjudge the flight through over-zeal.

I get in a tempestuous rage with myself for the mistakes that I make, but I find that much is forgiven me for my enthusiasm. Certainly enthusiasm is catching.

I never realized before how deeply ingrained is this enthusiasm for and about cricket. Every stage of the Test Match was reported to us in the enclosure or in the field almost as soon as it happened, so we had a double excitement, that of playing out our own game, and of wondering what the next development would be at Lord's. It was consoling to me after dropping a catch to find that both Australian and England Test Match players were capable of making the same mistakes.

One point puzzles me. Does cricket make these youngsters in the village so extraordinarily pleasant, or is it that the most pleasant and sound type of villager takes instinctively to cricket ?

We should be justified of our cricket week if only for the way it binds us together in one communion and fellowship of a very precious kind. I may have lost fifty pounds for failing to go to Germany, but what I gained by staying on the village green was infinitely more valuable to me than money, and could not be bought at any price.

## THE PARTY OUTING

IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ON A PARTY OUTING YOU HAVE missed one of life's major joys. I'm not suggesting that party outings are a new idea. They are as well established as hiking. It is only the method of taking them that has altered.

One of my earliest and sweetest memories is of our annual village choir outing in Derbyshire. This entailed catching a train some two miles away from home about four o'clock in the morning and being constantly shunted into sidings while faster trains swept disdainfully past on their more lawful occasions.

I was usually asleep by the time we reached Blackpool—it was always Blackpool—but the sight of the great wheel and tower invariably succeeded in rousing in me immortal longings, and for the next ten or twelve hours we lived every passing precious minute to the full.

We washed down a mixed dish of Blackpool rock, whelks, and oysters, with glasses of sherbet and ginger pop, and digested them on the switchback, helter-skelter, merry-go-round or donkeys. We then lay on the sand and went to sleep again. About midnight we could be seen forming part of the homeward-bound procession wending its way from the South Shore to Talbot Road, tunefully accompanied by mouth-organs.

Somewhere about dawn, after much more shunting we,

would disembark and straggle up the lane to our moorland hamlet, prepared to sing joyfully for another twelve months for so rich a reward.

It was, I think, the most acutely uncomfortable day in the whole year, and the one to which I most looked forward.

How mad and bad and sad it was :  
But then, how was it sweet.

I have always longed to join party outings ever since, and a week or two ago I achieved my ambition.

I joined the Bromley Co-operative Wholesale Society's Annual Outing to Margate. It was an astonishing eye-opener for me. Instead of starting in the dark hours, the train left Bromley (South) at 12.28 p.m. It left as punctually as if it were the Atlantic Coast Express, it travelled as fast, and its carriages were just as comfortable. There were about three hundred of us aboard, and the seating-accommodation was so generously arranged that not only was there ample room for all of us, but those who wanted solitude and complete quietude in which to read or knit were able to have it, while the more gregarious roamed in gangs of fours up and down the central corridor, which ran the whole length of the train, making assignations and appointments with other gangs, not always of the same sex.

There was Rene, I remember, a seventeen-year-old girl in a strawberry-pink print frock and pink shoes, with blonde hair that tumbled deliciously round her ears and shoulders, who looked back over her shoulder as she passed me and said to her three fellow nymphs : "You always make me go in front. It's ever so mean." Her blush was as refreshing as a newly opened wild rose, and very like it in colour. So walking down a train corridor is still an adventure for innocent youth.

Groups of boys, lords of creation, in immaculately clean cricket-shirts open at the neck, new sports jackets in every hue of purple, green, and brown, and exquisitely creased grey-flannel trousers, meandered with as independent an air as if they were strolling along the Bois de Boulogne, from coach to coach, Bert brandishing a bottle of beer, Alf making melody on a mouth-organ, and Jim ogling the giggling fair with "Meet me tonight in dreamland, sweetheart".

The train pulled up at a halt where schoolchildren were assembling in the road below for afternoon school. Immediately pennies were showered from open carriage windows with a reckless generosity that would have made a miser wince in agony.

The married men stopped their gambling to hurl their winnings out to the scrambling, cheering crowd below.

I bet they wished that all party outings stopped just there at that hour every day of the week.

I went in search of the leader, a man without a line on his face, but with a twinkle in his eye that betokened perpetual youth.

"You're pretty young to be in charge of all this crowd," I said.

"And how old do you think I am?" he replied.

"Twenty-six," I said, "at the outside."

"Double it," he answered, "and you've got it exactly."

When I had recovered I said, "If that's what running party outings does for you, I'm joining you tomorrow. What's the secret?"

"Let them run themselves," he said. "You see, on a train it's so easy. They know that if they're not on the platform in time it will go without them. If they go on a charabanc they can always count on somebody being late, so

they're late ; and coming back it's worse. You simply can't collect them for the bus, but these people on the train know that this train is scheduled to leave Margate at 8.14, and at 8.14 it will leave with the full complement. And, what's more, it will be back at Bromley before ten o'clock, which serves two purposes. Those who want a last drink to wind up a good day can get it before the 'pubs' shut, and those parents who like their boys and girls to be home by ten o'clock can rest assured that they will be.

"You never know when a charabanc will arrive home with the number of calls that they choose to make on the way. And, though that may suit the men, the young girls who haven't any use for drinking get bored stiff sitting in the 'charry' waiting."

I had no idea that a train journey of just over an hour could be so exhilarating.

You season-ticket holders, try travelling with a party outing. You'll be surprised at the amount of fun to be got out of what has become to you mere routine.

I don't recommend it daily, for other people's exhilaration is apt to prove fatiguing, but I did very much like the spirit of courtesy which impelled practically all the youth of the train to make a dash down the platform on reaching Margate to congratulate and thank the engine-driver and stoker for having brought them through the perilous ways of Kent unharmed.

I have a lurking feeling that some of them had an ulterior purpose and were trying to cajole the driver to let them work their passage home on the footplate.

Failing in this laudable objective, they turned their attention to Margate.

I expected to see the whole trainload spill itself into Dreamland. Not a bit of it.

One group of four boys, having now linked up with Rene and her group of four girls, made for the sands.

The last I saw of them was posed on donkeys, the boys in very becoming Cuban or Mexican polished black straw hats.

An elderly couple who had been reading all the way down went on reading in deck-chairs on the beach.

Three small infants were hurried off to a shop where they could glut themselves sick with Margate rock.

Three demure, silent maidens very unexpectedly turned into Dreamland, so I followed to see what their idea of enjoyment was, only to hear them go off into paroxysms of high, hysterical laughter on taking their seats in the scenic railway train long before it moved off.

You'd have thought that they would have had enough of trains.

Their shrieks as they moved slowly up an inclined plane and slid rapidly down the other side were only excelled in shrillness by two rather obese matrons who bravely entered the swimming-pool up to their knees.

It didn't take long to convince me that the party spirit has lost none of its vigour with the years, and that the average man is even more gregarious than ever. Indeed, there has been, of late years, an enormous increase in the number of those availing themselves of the very special terms offered by the Southern Railway to parties.

Last year no fewer than 25,911 parties, consisting of over a million members, took advantage of the Southern Railway's tempting offers.

Rotary Clubs, Freemasons, Sunday Schools, Mothers' Unions, The British Legion, Chambers of Commerce, Urban District Councils, Ratepayers' Associations, Women's Institutes, Men's Clubs, Conservative, Liberal, and Labour

Associations, and every sort of firm from a thousand employees down to ten, all find the Southern Railway party outing scheme the best way of enjoying a brief holiday.

Canvassers go round in the winter months to every conceivable group in their areas, however small, however heterogeneous.

A special subscription-card is issued to the secretary, and payments towards the outing are contributed at weekly or monthly intervals throughout the year.

This is an era when holiday-makers like to shelve all responsibilities and have other people do their planning for them, so the Southern Railway have taken to submitting an all-in charge, so that the subscriber knows before he starts exactly what the whole trip is going to cost him.

Food, guides, extra transport—by water, for instance—sometimes even barrels of beer for the train, are all included. The itineraries vary from educational visits to the cathedral cities of Winchester and Salisbury to dockyard and zoological gardens visits, from trips across the sea to Boulogne and Wimereux to rambles over the downs.

Canvassers go round, not only the schools, but the “pubs” where groups of regular *habitués*, drawn together by a common love of beer, will stay together to make up a select party for one of these outings.

For the word “party” is a fairly comprehensive term. It includes the three thousand employees of Carreras and it includes the cronies of the old “Bull and Bush” round the corner, who always support the public bar at the same instant every night of the year.

It varies from the go-as-you-please excursion of the Bromley Co-operative Society, who had no obligation to go anywhere or be anywhere at any particular time, so long as they caught the train at both ends, to the astonishingly



intricate and exquisitely organized programme that I am now going to unfold to you.

It may well serve for a model of the more ambitious party outings.

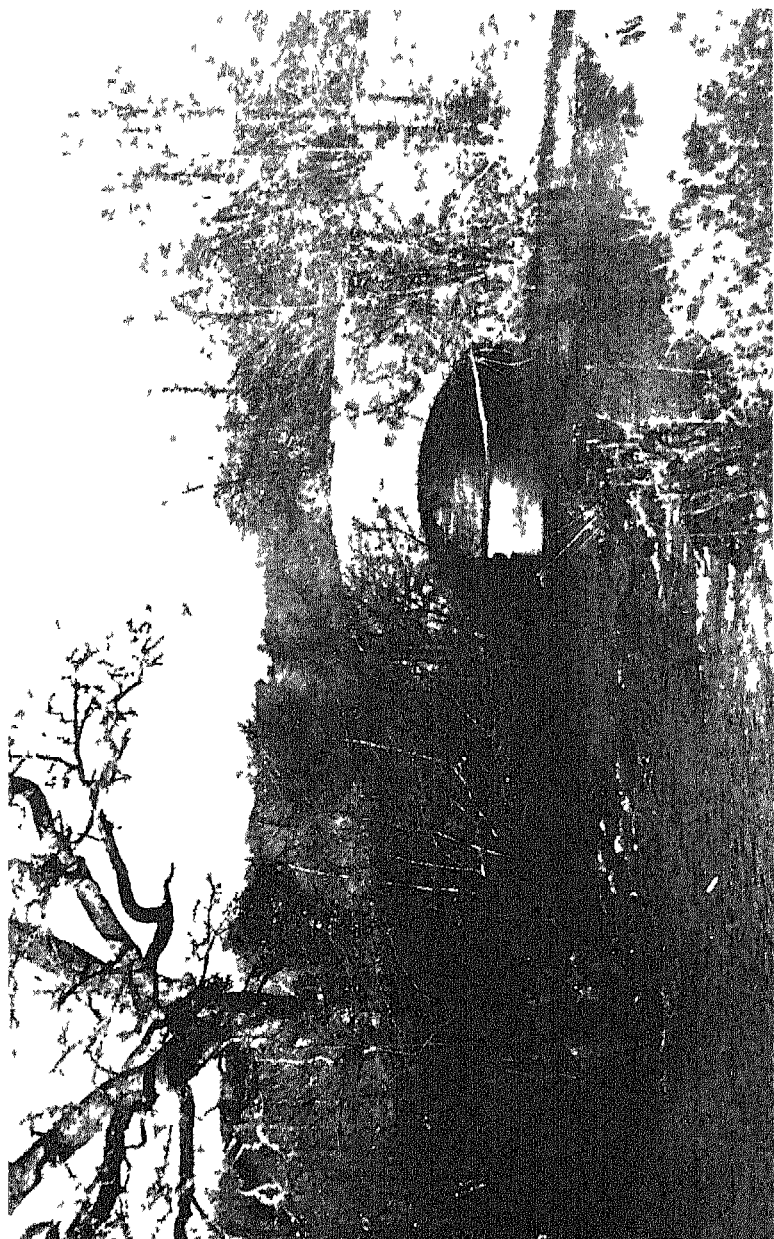
It is called the Baldwin-Webb Wrekin Party, and is as comprehensive and attractive a sixty-four page brochure as ever I read.

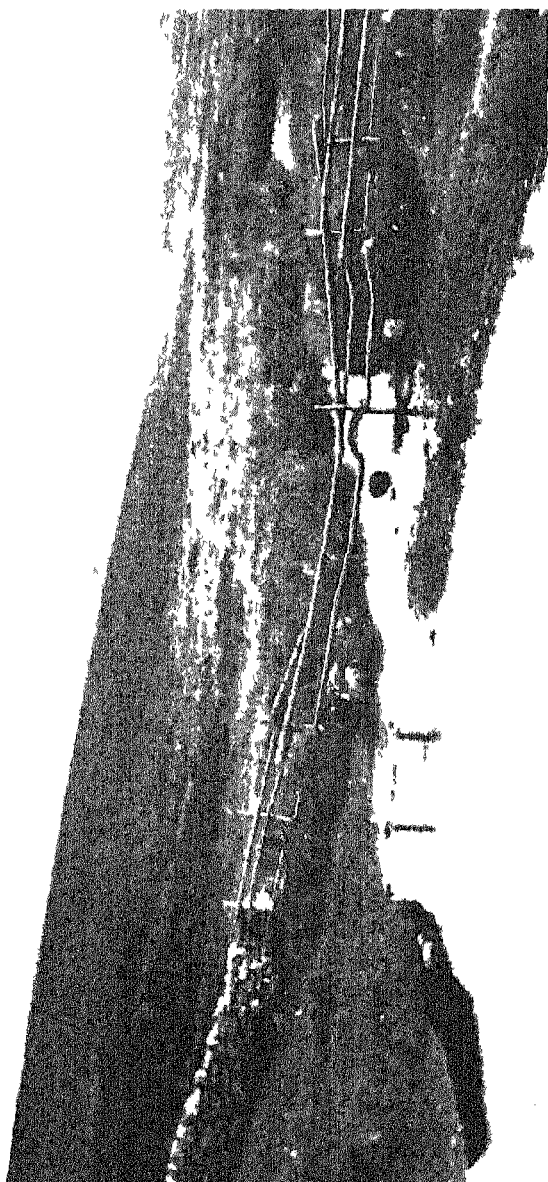
First there's a letter from Colonel Baldwin-Webb, explaining to his friends why he chose an outing to the South of England, why a cruise in the Channel, and why a visit to the Tattoo.

Then comes a list of the seven trains (*trains*, notice, not compartments or carriages), each with a different colour and a different name :

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Blue train ..   | .. The Fusilier   |
| 2. Yellow train .. | .. The Pikeman    |
| 3. Green train ..  | .. The Grenadier  |
| 4. White train ..  | .. The Dragoon    |
| 5. Pink train ..   | .. The Carabinier |
| 6. Buff train ..   | .. The Guardsman  |
| 7. Red train ..    | .. The Musketeer  |

Then the time-table of that train, the names of each train-major, train-captain and ten train-stewards, with advice about wearing the badge, not rushing, and how to reach the reserved seats in the Tattoo. Then follows a printed menu of the excellent luncheon provided on the train, a letter of welcome from Southampton, pictures of Southampton, and of the S.S. *Isle of Sark*, *Dinard*, *Southsea*, and *Balmoral*, in which the cruises are to be taken, with full details of the tonnage, speed, horse power, even length of each ship ; the menu for tea with an appropriate quotation from Omar Khayyám, the





detailed map and programme of the Tattoo, and of a midnight *matinée* ; the menu for dinner on the train and a valedictory quotation from Rupert Brooke to read on the homeward way.

You'll feel the long-limbed train throb, stretch, thrill motion, slide, pull out and sway.

This is a very far cry from the choir treat, or party outing of my childhood. This is luxury travel of the most modern kind, and at a cost so low that it would be quite impossible were not the numbers high.

Suppose you want to give a party of children a day's outing which is to be forever memorable both from the point of enjoyment and of developing their interest in the history and beauty of their own country : here's a scheme the cost of which is so low (so long as four hundred take it) as to be quite bewildering. They are taken by train from London to Winchester, taken over the city and cathedral by expert guides well versed in the art of keeping children amused (I've watched them), then taken for a coach drive through the New Forest with a scrumptious tea thrown in at the New Docks, Southampton, or on the train, whichever they prefer—have you ever watched a child have his or her first meal on a train ? It gives him more of a thrill than a visit to the Zoo—and so returned in safety home. All for 7s. 6d.

I find it difficult to think of any way of spending 7s. 6d. on a child for which one could get a more adequate return.

Children don't forget outings, as you have already seen.

Nor, for the matter of that, do grown-ups.

The more I look into these schemes for party outings the more I am amazed at the thoroughness with which the promoters have gone into the business of making them more widely popular.

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As one official said to me : "Short of calling them out of bed in the morning and tucking them in again at night, we do pretty well everything for them." And that's rapidly getting to be true.

It is small wonder that you sometimes look up from your newspaper to wonder at the approaching sound of cheers that grows quite deafening as the noisy trainload passes your quiet one.

You may wonder, you who treat your daily journey as much a matter of course as your breakfast, what all the fuss is about.

But to these joyful travellers, waving and shouting from the carriage window, the train is as exciting as breakfast is to a man who has crossed the desert without food.

The party outing has, perhaps, as its ultimate object the browning of poor Bermondsey children on a sun-kissed Sussex shore, but to travel is a better thing than to arrive, and the great kick that these parties get, whether they're children of nine or old men of ninety, is in the comfortable, fast corridor trains which take them to and fro.

And perhaps the culminating peak of enjoyment is to be found in the sunny smiles and unfailing courtesy of the railway officials, who enter into the holiday spirit of these parties in a way that ought to ensure them a front seat in heaven. These guards, porters, and ticket-collectors face hundreds and thousands of these party outings in the summer, and they bear with all their facetiousness with an imperturbable and friendly smile that makes one wonder where the source is of a railwayman's patience. It appears to be inexhaustible.

You can almost see the thought flicking through their minds : "It's their one day's outing in the year. I'm going to do my bit to make it a grand do."

"The sun shines more in the south," say the advertisements. I believe them to be true. Statistics prove it.

But, alas, there are no statistics to show how much more the sun seems to shine because of the sunny-mindedness of those who have party outings under their control.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WINTER WALK

(i)

*In the Cotswolds*

A KINGFISHER FLASHED PAST JUST AS I LEANED OVER THE bridge. A small boy, fishing for roach with dough, was surprised at my surprise.

"I often see three or four together," he said.

Up till then I had thought the kingfisher to be a solitary bird, but piscator ought to know better than viator.

In any case, I was not in search of halcyon, but of Plasher's Mead.

In spite of Birmingham's invasion of Burford the ghosts of Guy and Pauline remain as coyly elusive as ever under the willows above the Windrush.

Having satisfied myself that their shadows have not grown less, I climbed the hill out of Burford.

I wanted another Cotswold, something that I did not have to share.

A broad-margined road bordered with low stone walls sloped gently southward with a new row of wooden pig-bungalows neatly spaced out. A little down the road a small silver stream sauntered nakedly through the bottom of a green meadow, and more pigs, to my surprise, leaped and waded through the water to reach some El Dorado on the farther bank. I did not know that kingfishers were gregarious or that pigs swam. A copse disfigured by a dump of

tins made me quicken my pace, and a horde of noisy cyclists racing by made me decide to leave the road as soon as I could find a field-path.

But the Cotswold uplands are curiously devoid of foot-paths. Nor are they necessary, for the grass track by the roadside provides an escape for both horseman and foot-slogger and the views over the little dry walls are wide and uninterrupted.

This is a particularly interesting part of the world for, as the land tilts ever so slightly down towards the south, the brown earth changes to black, the stone walls to tousled hedges, and the big open pastureland full of grazing black-faced Oxford Downs sheep to small fields under the plough.

Looking backwards—and in all walks one should imitate Lot's wife once every five minutes at least—I now saw no traces of Burford or the little valley of the Windrush. The land seemed to slope upwards without a break to the long ridge of trees above Shipton. But ahead, all the land was broken by little green combes, and clumps of pines and beech trees protecting farms and hamlets.

And suddenly the road dipped and I was in Westwell. If I say that Westwell is the fairest village in the Cotswolds I lay myself open to the charge of claiming it as the finest village in England, and I am prepared to stand by the statement that I have seen none fairer.

*It is completely free from blemish.*

I stood at the top of the hill for some moments for two reasons. Naomi Royde Smith once said that a good poem was twice as good if you found it for yourself without recommendation.

I had never even heard of Westwell, and I found it difficult to take in so much beauty at once.

My second reason was the contingent of cyclists. They



had chosen the centre of the quiet hamlet for a virile exhibition of horseplay and ribaldry.

Luckily, I spied a blue-tit eyeing me from a tiny niche in the yellow stone wall. We had time to become quite friendly before the noisy horde moved on.

The right-hand side of the dip was occupied by two layers of high orchard walls, the outer of yellow Cotswolds dry walling, the inner and higher of Tudor red brick. Let into the outer wall was a stone carving of a Cardinal's hat with the inscription, "Ch. Ch. 1541".

This wall ended at the foot of the hill where a stream, whose bank was lined with unusually tall poplars, ran swiftly across the road. A large broken monolith stood just beside the raised village pond. Let into it I discovered to my surprise one of the hands of the clock face of the Cloth Hill at Ypres, as unusual and effective a war memorial as I have seen.

The geese on the pond were strident in their efforts to prevent me from passing upwards towards the shingled spired little church on the right-hand knoll. The tall square Georgian rectory, with its Cotswold stone roof and deep blue door, bore that air of unaccustomed prosperity that overtakes rectories when a layman restores what the priest cannot afford.

Inside the church all else was dwarfed by a Jacobean monument of a lord, with eight sons kneeling behind him, facing his prolific lady, with eight daughters kneeling behind her.

On the north side of the altar lay a much lonelier nameless earlier lord, with long Assyrian beard and long gown, resting his feet against a lion. In lieu of children he had many coats of arms carved in stone and the letter H on his right shoulder. He looked more contented than his quiver-filled colleague in the aisle.

As I came out into the porch I saw for the first time

the full richness of the village that I had missed before, a long, low thatched byre supported on stone pillars down on my left below the high orchard walls, and on the opposite side of the road behind other high walls I now saw the three gables of a stone-roofed, two-storeyed, stone-mullioned manor house with long buttressed barns on right and left as nobly conceived as the house.

Beyond the goose pond stood a row of stone-roofed cottages with tiny unfenced gardens right on the roadside, and an iron sign over a further house, depicting a bear with a staff and the red hand of Ulster beneath, led me to expect an inn ; but Westwell, so far as I could discover, possesses neither inn nor post-office, school nor store. It even shares its rector with a neighbour.

Westwell ends as abruptly as it begins.

As soon as the land begins to rise again, which it does at once, the houses cease, and I found myself almost immediately on a straight high road ; and, looking backward, there was no trace whatever of a village, church, or house.

But after a mile or so I came to a copse, and beyond it to an open field, with a perfect green circle and a green tumulus.

I was within a few yards of Akeman Street, but the sight of a farmer galloping over the field diverted me. He repudiated the idea that my finds were either a barrow or a prehistoric ring.

To console myself I left the road and took a wide green track over the fields to a group of farm buildings among a clump of trees.

I found there the usual proportion of derelict, tumble-down cottages, but well-filled barns.

I walked on over a stubble-land, alive with plover on one side and root-eating fat sheep on the other. A bevy of cockerels with coxcombs of hunting pink came gallantly and

vociferously towards me and followed me up a further rise to the village which shares its rector with Westwell.

It was normal Cotswold, a medley of stone troughs, stone staddle-stones, falling walls, outside stone steps to lofts, stone slabs bowring the gardens, stone balls on the walls, and more cottages falling down.

Here was at last a foot-path marked on the map. It turned out to be a wide green track leading first above and then across a clear brook to a stone-wall country with many red-painted notices to "'Ware Wire" and "'Ware Water", for in one dip the stream imperceptibly widened to a considerable lake just underneath the very sort of wall that a hot-headed hunting man would be inclined to take "blind".

The green track led to a gate, where an elderly horse refused to budge to let me into the lane on the further side.

The lane dwindled to a foot-bridge over another water and then again deposited me on a stone wall-bordered road leading upwards to a ridge, where I saw the constant flash in the sunlight of many cars dashing from Cheltenham to Oxford and Oxford to Cheltenham.

The sight of leather-coated golfers in a field on my left brought me back with a jerk to civilization and society.

I was glad that the sky began to be overcast. The curtain had fallen on my loveliness.

Looking back, I could see nothing but grasslands and stone walls.

Westwell was invisible and as quickly fading as the memory of a lovely dream on waking.

(ii)

*In Wessex*

The invitation, coming out of the blue from one who was almost a relative, startled me. Would I talk on "Solitude"

to a cocktail party in a manor house in the very heart of Dorset? I looked C—— up on the map. It was remote enough to ensure for me the day's solitude that I felt entitled to take after such an ordeal. The bait was too strong to be resisted. The ordeal was less exacting than I expected, the reward infinitely greater.

I announced boldly on the morning after the party that I was not going home. I was going for a walk alone. Had I not been hired to exalt solitude? I had surely a right to test my theories. Anyway, I took that right, striding rather quickly up the soggy pastureland at the back of the manor house lest some member of the house party should suddenly decide that he, too, wanted to test solitude—in my company.

My host, as a motorist, was only capable of recommending the high road.

"You'll find that lonely enough," he said. "At this time of year I never pass a soul from dawn till dusk."

I refrained from giving him the wanderer's views on road-walking.

My object was to spend my day as far as possible from either the sound or sight of a road.

I began well. Climbing upward over the big grassland with no other idea than of getting to the top and keeping there I chanced on a broad track, tinged more vividly green than any of the impinging fields. It led me past two cottages on the crest of the hill which no longer needed the protecting wind-break of tall pines that sheltered them from the western gales.

The wind was rising and moaned as it passed. The distant downlands were being quickly obliterated by an approaching storm, but these cottages afforded me no protection. They were abandoned, but not yet wholly derelict.

The storm swept past and the skies cleared.

Then began my usual battle with the map. I knew whence I had come. I knew whither I was bound. I could only guess quite vaguely and, as it happened, quite incorrectly, where I was. The words *tumulus* and *dyke* printed in august Roman were not helpful, for there were lynchets, mounds, grass ramparts, and deep declivities on all sides.

I needed no reminder from the map that I was treading a very ancient way.

As I always read the thinned lines of the contours the wrong way I was unable to tell whether I was to expect a top or bottom on my right or left.

But so long as the way led upward along a wide green springy track I was well content. The sun shone out of a blue sky. The gorse was in full bloom. The bracken was fox-red, and on the south banks of a vast rampart ahead myriads of rabbits sat sunning themselves outside their front doors with as little (and as much) movement as maggots in cheese.

Inside the ramparts I found myself on stubble almost pigeon-grey, so numerous were the small-holed flints that had "sweated" through the soil.

And suddenly I saw below me the whole soft green wooded weald of Blackmore Vale stretching away north to the borders of Somerset and east as far as Cranborne Chase.

Below me, westward stood one cottage in the bottom of a rounded cup. To get to it I had to wade ankle deep through a watery lane. A smiling farmer emerged as I sauntered by, told me that his farm was called "Folly", and that ahead of me on the next rise lay "the sweetest walk in all Dorset". "Turn to the left at the dew pond and the Roman camp."

But before essaying that, I dallied a little at the thatched

"Fox" Inn at the other side of the cross-roads, for I had not breakfasted, and luncheon seemed unlikely.

The one occupant of the bar was eating bread and cheese and drinking "rough" cider. I asked for milk, only to be told that they only used "tinned". Falling back on beer, I was taken to task by the cider-drinker for not joining him. "I orften drink 'en dru a straw standing on barrel," he said, "till I turn orver."

I passed over my snuff-box. He took it with a Beau Nash flourish. "Huntsman's my usual," he said, "but this yur's noa so bad."

I felt that I had almost rehabilitated myself in his esteem.

I found myself gazing semi-consciously at a notice suggesting antagonism to refugee-billeting in the hamlet.

Following my gaze, the cider-drinker said blandly :

"Nob'dy in Plush takes no notice o' them things. Sometimes they puts up notices about dances."

He laughed loudly at the idea of any inhabitant of Plush wishing to dance.

The way from the "Fox" led up a steep lane, where the hedge had just been trimmed, to a gate which gave on to a broad down where I heard the cries of newly born lambs. It was St. Andrew's Day, and they were the first lambs that I had heard. I found them almost as moving as the sight of the first swallow.

There was more gorse on the top, and old molehills pitted the otherwise smooth face of the grassy way like smallpox.

Ahead stood a clump of firs and yews, and just by them a tiny dew pond with grasses blown flat on its surface and an almost perfect raised grass square, about forty yards each way, marked on the map as "British village". This was the farmer's "Roman camp", where I was to turn left. This also, though I didn't know it, was Tess's "Flintcomb Ash".

Below me, to the south, the sides of Whatcombe Bottom were grey with the bare boughs of elders.

A horseman, emerging from a field, went galloping over the broad green turf about a thousand yards ahead, also obeying the farmer's injunction to bear leftward. I felt a strong temptation to keep straight ahead, but in the end I followed the horseshoe bend because it kept on the top longer, and I was in no hurry.

Then came a choice of three gates, and, recalling the Greek adage about "nothing in excess", I chose the middle way. This almost immediately brought me to the edge of the downland where the green track descended steeply as a toboggan-slide to a thatched post-office and general stores combined, where the young woman, seeing that I was reading the notice in the window, said: "You can't make gas-proof rooms in these houses." The notice ran: "A.R.P. Alton Pancras did not appear to be represented on the 3rd instant, but I hope will be at next three lectures."

As Alton Pancras consists only of these two cottages, a yellow rectory and a brick farm separated by a flint church, precautions against gas-attacks struck me as suggesting either undue thoroughness or undue casualness on the part of a potential enemy.

A merry stream swept past the farm and down one side of the road. A rush and bellowing of cows towards a gate led me to watch a cowman bringing in a cow with her newly born dead calf flung over his shoulder.

As I wandered up the hill on the farther side I looked back and saw quite a different Alton Pancras. Now it was all orangy with lichen, and the green hill that I had come down was now terraced with lynchets.

On the top I came to a tip of tin cans, further proof of

the artificiality of the food that country people are now reduced to.

Then again, suddenly I found myself looking on the rim of a green downland cup, at the foot of which blue wood-smoke wreathed itself round the tall church tower of Cerne Abbas.

A road led straight down to it. I took the circuitous way of the green rim and ran into a blinding storm, succeeded by a rainbow whose arc was as symmetrical as the arc of the downs.

When I came to the gorse-covered shoulder of Cerne Hill I saw the flag flying above the brown castle of Minterne, below the woods of High Stoy, and smoke rising from the chimneys of the old workhouse to remind me that it is now a youth hostel.

I was searching for the famous Cerne Giant whose figure is cut in the side of the hill.

When eventually I lighted on it, it seemed to me to have shrunk, the face seemed to be sinister, the legs and thighs curiously muscular, the staff held at an unusual angle like an Irishman brandishing a shillelagh. Below the figure stands a small notice : "The National Trust : The Cerne Giant."

The church stands within a few hundred yards from the giant, but to reach it I had to sink calf-deep in slush and pass through a flint farm with fast-decaying Tudor gate-house and oriel windows.

I was reassured by the sight of three ducks contentedly sleeping with their necks twisted far round to allow their beaks to nestle into their downy backs.

Another stream catapulted me into the church, and a ray of sunshine through the stained-glass windows precipitated me out again to wish at St. Augustine's Well. I then sauntered down the village street, which was green with



weeds when I was a boy, as the railway over the hill had taken all the traffic.

The coming of the motor-car brought all the traffic back again, but I battered on the doors of the "New" Inn in vain. They had all gone to Dorchester market. A cottage announced teas. "Not in the winter," said the lady of the house, with some asperity.

The post-office possessed no public telephone. The gift-shop was shut. I was beginning to despair of Cerne when I saw another thatched cottage with a sign: "TEA'S".

Illiteracy proved more hospitable than the brewer.

A dear old lady gave me eggs in the warm kitchen.

"I'm going to shut up next week to look after my mother," she said.

"Your mother?"

"I'm seventy-four. She's ninety-three. We live a long time in Cerne."

They have need to, as the population has decreased by one half in my lifetime.

It is a curious commentary on our age that ten, twenty, thirty times as many people come to see Cerne now that there is very little left in Cerne to see. But if you wish for solitude you have only to climb above the giant on to any ridge of these downs, say the Cross in Hand on Batcombe, where Tess swore that curious oath to Alec d'Urberville, to be as lonely as ever Tess was on her sad walk to Beaminster.

## THE FOOT-PATH WAY

IN VIEW OF THE AMOUNT OF TALK THAT THERE HAS BEEN lately about national parks you may be surprised to know that the only national parks that we at present maintain, at a cost of £200,000 a year, are all in London. Pretty well all other countries, whose need for them is far less urgent than ours, long ago adopted the idea ; indeed the Yellowstone Park, which is one of the outstanding wonders of the United States, has been a national park for close on seventy years.

The need for the preservation of unspoilt wild country, both for the protection of wild-plant, bird, and animal life and for the love of natural beauty, is becoming every day more urgent, for every day sees the final disappearance of yet another slice of unspoilt England, swallowed up not only by the speculative builder, but by the War Office, mining and quarrying industries, water catchment and water-power schemes, overhead cables, road developments, large-scale commercial afforestation schemes, and the like. It has to be remembered that it nearly always pays someone to destroy natural beauty and nearly always costs us all something to preserve it.

That in itself is enough to make it difficult to rouse the Government to make laws that may disturb vested interests.

On the other hand, the general public are showing a very rapidly increasing desire to spend their leisure in exploring our wilder places. Private cars and public motor transport have combined to make almost every part of Britain easily accessible. Shorter hours of work have provided just that

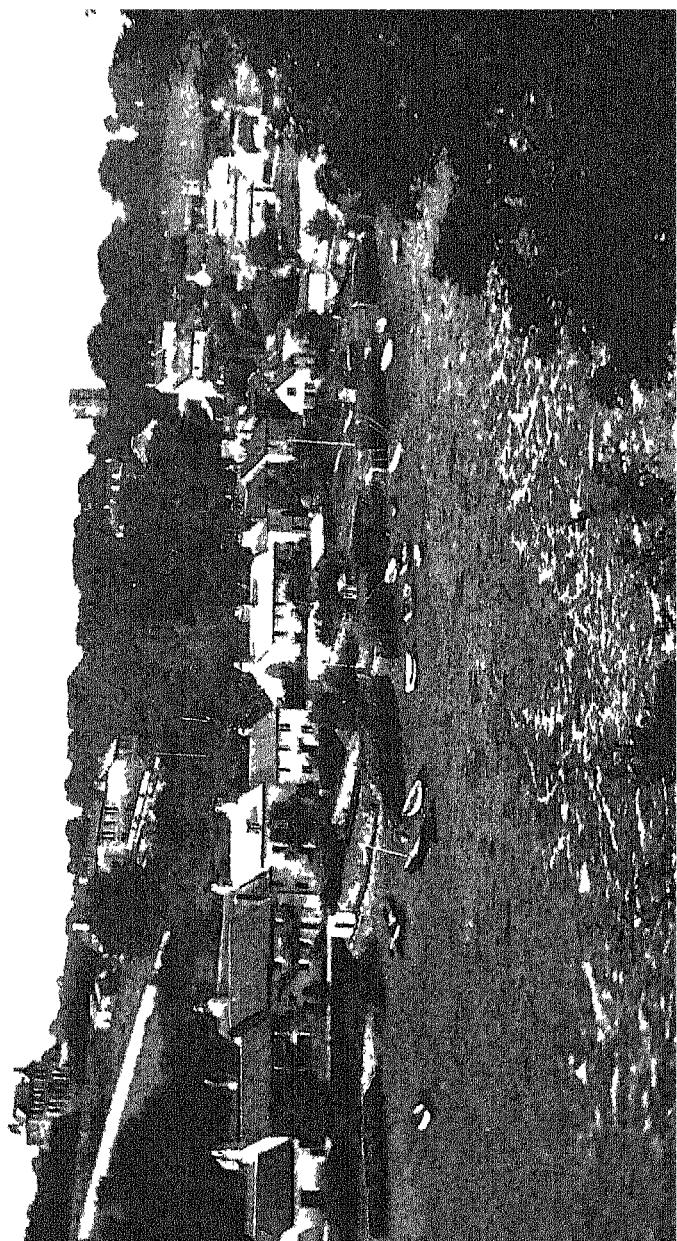
extra amount of leisure required to be able to move further afield than one's local football ground, and holidays with pay have enabled a vastly increased number of workers not only to move further, but to stay away from home longer. There has, in addition, been the instinctive desire of every man to get out of hearing of the city's din and to rest his eyes on wider horizons than the house opposite.

All these things have led to a new discovery of England on a very extensive scale.

It has also led to a spoliation of England on such a scale that many people believe that unless national parks are not quickly earmarked there will be no land left worth earmarking for that purpose. At the moment there are still many suitable areas from which to take a choice. The most obvious area in England is the Lake District, in Wales, the Snowdon country, and in Scotland the Cairngorm range. Indeed, so suitable and obvious are these three areas that many people already regard them as national parks. But if the Lake District were indeed a national park, there would have been no planting of conifers round Thirlmere or damming of Haweswater, no motor roads at Honister and Buttermere Hause, no Forestry Commission cottages on Whinlatter, or barbed wire in Ennerdale.

Owing to public spirit and private generosity, all the high ground of the Cumbrian and Westmorland fells and mountains above the lakes is forever accessible, but the Lake District as a whole is still very far from being a national park.

Owing to the indefatigable efforts of Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis, a great part of the Snowdon country is forever preserved for the people, and the members of the Cairngorm Club have helped considerably to make one feel that Braeriach, Ben Macdhuì, and the Cairngorm itself are unlikely ever to be restricted again.





But in England encroachment on public rights proceeds at such a pace that some of the likelier and more reasonable areas are already too hemmed in and gnawed into to be of any use. By far the best national park for the Londoner would have been the whole stretch of the South Downs. They are not, of course, high, but they are aesthetically as satisfying as any landscape in England. The whole length from Eastbourne to the Hampshire border makes admirable grazing-land, and grazing-land is exactly fitted to the needs of a national park ; for a national park, as I see it, is an area where everyone is free to ride or walk as he will while the pasturage is still being utilized by the sheep and cattle. Fifteen years ago it would have been possible to schedule the whole area. Today there is more and more wire going up, and efforts made to keep off the public and to take strip after strip for building-land.

An ideal national park in the North of England would be the high waste land of Kinderscout in the Peak District, which is within easy reach of the great industrial centres of the Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire border. Up to now, this vast plateau of bog and heather has been preserved for a few business men to shoot grouse over for a very few days in the year. This anomaly, which led to clashes between the gamekeepers and walkers who refused to recognize the law of trespass over these grouse-haunted moors, is happily removed by the passing of the Access to Mountains Bill.

Dovedale, nearby, is enjoying a happier fate. Owing to the enthusiasm of a faithful band of lovers of the dale, great stretches of this lovely land have been acquired and turned over to the National Trust, and there really appears to be some chance of this gem of limestone crags and silver trout-streams becoming our first national park.

Its nearest rival is that part of Exmoor known as the

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Holnicote Estate, where some six thousand acres of heather, bracken, and whortleberry-covered combes and moorland round Dunkery Beacon have been made over to the National Trust by the Acland family. But, generous though this gift was, it does not allow of a national park on the relative scale of other lands, and there are many of us who would like to see the whole 200,000 acres of Dartmoor turned into a really representative national park of the West Country. It is admirably adapted for that purpose, for it would be upsetting nobody. Everybody is already at liberty to ride or walk over its granite tors and fish its moorland peat-streams, but there is, as yet, no guarantee that it will always remain free. It is unlikely that anyone will be so rash as to build another Princetown, but already in the richer combes houses are being built, moorland enclosed, and fishing-rights "strictly preserved". It is the penalty that all lovely land suffers after discovery. People who at a first visit are content to gaze come again if they have the means, with intent to grab and secure their prize against all comers.

That is perhaps why it would be wiser to select for our national parks some area that has not already become the hunting-ground of the holiday-maker and retired merchant, but still maintains its ancient solitariness.

Such a country is luckily still to be found in the Welsh marshes in Breconshire, Radnorshire, and Montgomeryshire, where the population (forty-five to the square mile) is exactly the same as it was in the fourteenth century. The land round Ystradfellte in Breconshire, with its gorgeous ravines and high waterfalls, and lovely mountain heights crossed only by green Roman ways, would make an ideal national park, as would that splendid isolated tract of moorland known as Radnor Forest, the very heart of which

has been annexed by the B.S.A. as a testing-ground for arms and ammunition. The objection to these little-known hills is, of course, their distance from the areas where live the people who most need national parks.

Perhaps in the end we shall have the wisdom to be bold and simply annex the whole of the Pennine as a national park instead of meekly asking for the right to have one continuous foot-path to connect Derbyshire with the Border, as I have heard suggested. And if not the Pennine, why not the Cheviot, and share our liberties with the Border Scot ?

But it is a vain thing to talk about annexing national parks and creating national animal and bird preserves when we cannot even unite to preserve our foot-paths. The Essex County Council signposted their foot-paths some time ago and raised thereby the wrath of certain farmers who saw in these signposts a definite invitation to the general public to start crossing fields, just when it looked as if the ancient custom was really dying out. Indeed, the surveyors of Essex did a thorough job, for they have marked out in six years 2600 miles of foot-paths and erected as many signposts. The County Council of West Sussex has more recently prepared a map showing some 3000 public foot-paths within its area, but I do not think that many of these are yet signposted. Every County Council should follow the admirable lead given by Essex and Sussex if only to determine exactly what is the law about rights of way.

*Every farmer has seized the chance given him by the villagers, who now take to bus and car instead of taking the field-path, to close his field-paths, wire the stiles, and make obstructions wherever possible. Even in Cornwall I keep on finding immovable granite stiles in the hedges and walls of fields with no path leading up to or away from them, as the farmer has obliterated the old tracks.*



It is very little use our inaugurating national health campaigns and national fitness campaigns if every obstacle is put in the way of our taking natural exercise. We are invited to see England on horseback, and there is no better way ; but if farmers are going to be allowed to put barbed wire across all the bridle-paths, nobody is going to see England from a horse. We are invited to walk more, to use the youth hostels, to see the real countryside that is our most precious heritage, yet prevented from walking anywhere except along the noisome death-traps of the arterial roads.

If farmers persist in wiring field-paths they have only themselves to blame if they find their hedges broken down and even their gates left open. There is nothing an Englishman resents more than the unfair curtailment or abolition of his rights, and he knows full well that for centuries he has had the right to cross fields, and he is not going to be put off by the absence of a path. If it has vanished he will make a new one for himself.

So for everybody's sake it is well that County Councils should act as arbiters and decide for us exactly where we may and may not roam freely. I am, for my part, willing to buy all the maps there are that really show rights of way, for I am tired of the Ordnance Survey's continual reminder that the evidence of a foot-path on their maps is no evidence of a right of way, which always strikes me as a direct incitement to all farmers to deny any wanderer the right to tread any of the paths that cross his land.

But better than having to buy maps would be the general adoption of the signposting principle and adapt it for field-paths as generally and extensively as for roads. Then we should know not only whither we were bound, but on what ground we stood, whether we were freemen or trespassers, within our rights or extorting a privilege.

## THE HIKE

THE POLICEMAN WAS CONCISE AS TO THE DIRECTION and as to the distance.

"Take bus 137," he said, "from that corner."

"I'm walking," I replied.

He lifted his eyebrows, but otherwise betrayed no emotion. I was obviously, in his eyes, a little mad; but to policemen half the world is harmlessly eccentric and the other half harmfully criminal.

"It's very nearly a mile," he said. "You can't walk that far. And why walk when you can get a bus?"

A few days later found me at Williton, in Somerset. I had just got off the train with the idea of walking the length of the Quantock Hills. The first mile or so had to be along the road, and I hate road-walking.

I was, however, overtaken by a car which pulled up with a screech of brakes. A red-faced farmer poked his nose out and shouted: "Want a lift?"

I joined him and asked him to put me down at the foot of the hills.

"I'm walking over the top to Taunton," I said.

He whistled in astonishment.

"Why, man," he said, "you can't do that. It's every bit of twelve miles. I'm going there myself. I shall be there in half an hour. Stay in the car."

"But it's the walk I want," I replied; "not to go to Taunton."

He shook his head slowly.

"I didn't know that there were people who walked for the sake of walking."

I rose to that bait. "After horse-riding," I said, "walking is the finest exercise in the world."

He snorted.

"Exercise?" he echoed. "I get all the exercise I want on my farm."

"That's just the trouble with the modern world," I said. "We're not all farmers. The only way left is to pretend that we are by walking over the land that you farmers own, before we forget what the countryside looks like and stands for."

"That's all right so long as you don't leave the gates open and make gaps in the hedges for the cattle to stray."

I remembered a group of London ramblers whom I was conducting through Kent. We were walking through a green woodland ride. A cock pheasant got up with a whirr from my feet. The girl by my side gave a scream and clutched my arm.

"Mercy, Mr. Mais! What was that?"

She couldn't have been more frightened if it had been a bomb.

"That, my dear," I answered, "is what we call in England a pheasant."

"Oh, is that what a pheasant looks like?" she said. "I've often wondered."

I remembered another old lady on one of these ramblers' excursions who brought up for my inspection a rhododendron that she had just picked.

"Could you tell me the name of this pretty flower, please, Mr. Mais?" she asked.

Well, I believe that there's something wrong when

English people no longer recognize the pheasant or a rhododendron.

Luckily there is every sign that youth today is refusing to be denied its rightful heritage of the countryside. That is why hordes of young men and women set out every Sunday with rucksacks on their backs to walk the lanes, foot-paths, woods, and downlands near their homes.

I approve strongly of their action. I disapprove strongly of their clothes.

I think most hikers make the mistake of dressing in the wrong clothes and overburdening themselves with too much gear. With those heavy packs on their backs they look too much like an army on the march.

For my part, I think it is also a mistake, to walk, as most hikers do, in crowds. Their excuse is that walking is a sociable exercise and that man is a gregarious animal.

It is a mistake because the object of going into the country is to see the country and hear country sounds. You can both see and hear your neighbour during the rest of the week. The countryside has a habit of refusing to reveal its secrets to a mob of people, but is fully ready to open its heart to any solitary wayfarer.

Walking alone, for instance, I am daily seeing foxes playing. A gang of talkative walkers might walk the length and breadth of England for a year and never see so much as a single fox's brush.

But I would far rather see men and women going in search of the country in gangs than not searching for it at all.

It shows that they feel the urge even if they have failed to achieve the technique of walking. For there is as much technique in walking as there is in singing or writing.

I remember once seeing a very pretty but flustered girl

come hurriedly out of a woodland ride near Brasted, waving a book at me to stop. When she caught me up she said breathlessly :

"Can you tell me where we are ? We're absolutely lost."

"Well, I'm lost too," I said ; "but I like being lost. It's not the getting to places that matters on a walk, it's the walk itself."

"You seem to have different ideas from my friend. I'll go and try to find him."

"That's because I've studied the art. I, too, began by racing along map in hand, trying to eat up the miles and get to places. No, don't go. Let him find us."

She smiled.

"He never will, but I'm interested. Do you suggest that there's something wrong with carrying a map ?"

"I do if you want it to help you to get to places. I only take maps to help me to get lost. It's twice as easy to get lost with a map as without one."

She tossed her pretty head.

"That sounds nonsense to me," she said.

"It isn't nonsense at all," I replied hotly. "Surely it's easier to find your way from the actual lie of the land than from an artificial representation of it on a minute scale. If it isn't it shows that you've forgotten what the country looks like."

"I thought," replied the girl, "that you said that the pleasure lay in not being able to find your way."

"So I take a map," I said ; "but it's a geological map."

"You're getting me all confused," she said. "What else do I do that's wrong ?"

"Well, now you've asked me," I said, "I'll tell you. First of all, your shoes are too thin for walking. They're all right for Bond Street."

"Thick soles are so ugly. What else is wrong?"

"You're carrying too much in your pack."

"We've got the minimum required by the youth hostel rules. Ground-sheet, k, s, f, m, p, and t-b."

"What's all that?"

"Knife, spoon, fork, mug, plate, and toothbrush."

"Wouldn't it be more comfortable to stay on some farm?"

She snorted angrily.

"We don't want comfort. Besides, we can't afford it. They charge 3s. 6d. and 4s. 6d. for bed and breakfast at farms. In the youth hostels they only charge a bob a night, and there's always a singsong after supper."

"And that's all wrong," I said witheringly. "Hikers meeting hikers. In the country you ought to become part of the country, meet country people."

"Getting sozzled playing darts in the bar, I suppose? A nice thing to recommend to a young girl."

"If you were sozzled you couldn't play darts. I think the companionship of the bar is more precious even than the Companionship of the Bath. In the bar you hear what you come into the country to hear—country matters, talk of the soil, the crops, animals; racy, humorous, Shakespearian talk. Town folk have forgotten how to talk. And that's another reason for walking alone."

"Are you suggesting that we shouldn't even walk together?"

"I am," I said. "You're engaged to be married, aren't you?"

The girl blushed.

"How did you know?"

"Well, you got lost. You've no eyes for anything but each other."

"Anything wrong about that?"

"Not in its proper place. But in the country you ought to be looking at the country, thinking about the country, absorbed in the beauty of the country. One beauty gets in the way of the other. You can't take in both at once."

"You're saying all this just because you're a solitary kind of person."

It was my turn to laugh.

"That shows how little you've followed what I've said. I'm tremendously fond of people. I'm always with people. I like sitting on this tree-trunk talking to you. But in order to be fresh for people I rather think I owe it to them to be a person myself. So I go into the country alone, exactly as an empty pitcher goes to the well—to be filled.

"And I make sudden and refreshing contacts. After all, you wouldn't have spoken to me if I hadn't been alone, would you?"

She blushed again.

"No, I don't suppose I should. But you looked harmless, and I really am lost, you know."

We had neither of us noticed the young man coming up from behind.

"Hi!" came a shout. "What's all this?"

The girl rose. "He says we ought to get lost more. He's been telling me what's wrong with me."

The young man advanced threateningly.

"Oh, he has, has he? Perhaps he'll tell me what's wrong with me."

"Delighted," I said. "Your boots are too thick. You're not climbing Everest. Your pack is too heavy. A thick rug gets in your way. You'd look better without that beret. You don't want a map, and you'd be more comfortable in

grey flannels than in those tight shorts. Otherwise, except for one thing, you're perfect."

"Thank you. And what's the one thing?"

"You haven't learnt how to walk. But I'm going to leave her to teach you." I turned to the girl and whispered in her ear.

"Never cover more than a mile an hour," I said.

He took her rather roughly by the arm.

"We've wasted about half the day," he said. "We'll never get to Ide Hill."

"Who cares about Ide Hill?" she said sweetly. The poison had begun to work.



## THE INN

WHEN DOCTOR JOHNSON SAID THAT THERE IS NO PRIVATE house in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern he added his reason, and a very good reason it is. "No man," he said, "can as fully command what is in another man's house as if it were his own." It is the freedom of the inn that makes it sometimes even more of an Englishman's castle than his own home—the freedom of conversation engendered by palatable drink, and the freedom of the social circle which he joins as soon as he enters the door.

There is in a very special way a close relation between the inn and the Englishman's independence. The forces that have in the past sought to coerce the Englishman into certain paths of thought and certain courses of action have been very powerful. They have had need to be in a country where every man guards so jealously his right to his own individuality. Among these forces perhaps the strongest is the moral force, and because alcohol had the effect so much lamented by Cassio ("O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!") on those weaklings unable to take their drink like gentlemen or to know when to stop drinking, the moralists did their best to degrade the inn to such a low level that men were ashamed to enter a pub. Once, in Hoylake, a minister for

whom I had been lecturing refused to accompany me to an inn when I was wet and cold, on the ground that it would disgrace his cloth.

In Truro I found an inn where they keep the door of the bar shut lest passers-by should see who the disgraceful drinkers are ; and all over the country there are still inns where there are thick glass partitions dividing you from your next-door neighbour so that you shall not know who it is or what he is drinking.

It is to me one of the greater mysteries of life that the English people, the very breath of whose life it is to be free, will continue voluntarily and without any outcry to submit to the most staggering anomalies in the matter of the regulation of their drink and food. In Shropshire the inns shut (not open) at one o'clock, which is the very hour that you and I normally expect to eat, and open at three o'clock, when nobody wants to eat or drink. In Lerwick, a dry town, I was told that I could only have a whisky if I bought a case of twelve bottles.

Everyone knows the anomaly by which you can drink till 10.30 on one side of a city street and then have to cross the street if you want to continue what is far more often an interrupted conversation than an interrupted drink till eleven o'clock. There are certain places and certain hours (I have never had the time or patience to find out where or which they are) where you may continue to drink if you have sandwiches. If you dislike sandwiches but like drink and give the sandwich to your wife or dog, you are liable to go to prison. On one railway system you appear to be able to drink at all hours. If you ask for a drink on another you are reminded rather severely of laws that you imagined only dealt with the static.

But, being normally extraordinarily apathetic about

petty discomforts and extremely chary about tampering with the law, we good-humouredly shrug our shoulders and allow ourselves to be bound in by sets of rules that no self-respecting schoolboy would obey for a day.

Now it so happens that the inn is a strong non-political association where men can and do express with great forcefulness their aspirations about freedom in the home, the tyranny of employers and governments, and a hundred and one matters that nearly affect their own lives.

The bar is a clearing-house of ideas, and it is here that the fight for freedom, or the stand against further infringement of individual rights begins.

There is, for example, the rule that prevents children of tender years from accompanying their fathers and mothers into the congenial and warm society of the bar. There are few sillier or sadder sights than that of pale, wan, undernourished, ill-clad children standing in the rain waiting for the return of a parent who may well wish to prolong the moments of good cheer and good companionship within as long as possible. Obviously this silly law didn't deter the parent who was determined to get a drink. If the house is locked up the child is bound to accompany the parent right through the evening and does so everywhere except to the inn.

At last the brewers have risen to the absurdity of this piece of needless cruelty. I have just seen an inn with a special annexe built for children, with oak seats for use in summer in an out-of-doors arbour and for winter a glorious playing-room, the walls of which were decorated with tiles depicting characters in *Alice in Wonderland*. In this crèche children can be comfortably left to play together while their parents can rest and refresh themselves, free of responsibility.

There are still inns today where men regard the intrusion of women with suspicion, and make the atmosphere feel hostile should any passing girl hiker or motoring maiden dare to invade the sanctuary. But this splitting-up of drinkers into sexes and classes is insidious and dangerous. There is a sufficiently wide cleavage between employee and employer, blackcoat and corduroy, profession and trade, town and country, without seeking further to accentuate it by keeping people apart in their hours of leisure.

The inns have it in their power to bring together types of people who ought to get together and listen to each other's points of view. I cannot see any other meeting-ground for the townsman and the countryman. The inn is as much an integral part of English life as the village green. It has evolved slowly. There is nothing in the least like it on the continent of Europe or in the United States. It is a very precious stronghold of the freeman who will not be bullied or shamed into regarding alcohol as the devil's advocate. It is, therefore, very much to our interest to see that this institution is interfered with as little as possible.

A great number of licensing magistrates have as little first-hand knowledge of the modern inn as they have of the modern aeroplane, and allow ancient prejudice to colour their judgment.

"No child of mine, please God," they say, "shall ever enter an inn," and thereby condemn their children to far worse places. The old-time gin-palace looked tawdry and may have encouraged vulgarity and over-indulgence. The new inn is in at least as much good taste as the new school and the new bank, which indeed it resembles closely in its exterior.

The Englishman's mug of beer is almost the sign-manual of the Englishman's independence. With this in

his hand he is able to engage in conversation on equal terms any other Englishman similarly equipped. With this in his hand he can inveigh against social inequalities and the frequent miscarriage of justice. But he will also be fortified with a certain stoic philosophy that is entirely denied to those who have lost or been deprived of the power to think and act for themselves. The politics of the village pump may be as insipid and innocuous as the water drawn up from the well, but the philosophy of the village inn is really the quintessence of the English temperament, and its basic principle is independence.





## THE HOTEL ON THE MOOR

I CHOSE, OF ALL TIMES, THE FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER for my visit to the Manor House Hotel, Moretonhampstead.

London was grey and dismal. I felt, myself, grey and dismal. It was the sight of Cornish cream on the luncheon menu that first stirred in me once more immortal longings.

"Why Cornish?" I asked, as a true Devonian.

"Because this is the Cornish Riviera Express," said the attendant. That seemed reasonable enough. I enjoyed it in spite of its name.

We raced through Taunton. I forsook the comfort of my seat to stand in the corridor—a sure sign of returning excitement.

Yes. Even in mid-winter the magic worked.

There was the unbelievable dark terra-cotta soil, slopes all russet with dead bracken, the dim blue tops of Exmoor, whitewashed cob cottages roofed with grey thatch, and stout stucco foursquare country houses in well-wooded parks.

I was home again, in the land of Grenville, Raleigh, Hawkins, and Drake, the richest county in England in heroes and in beauty.

Soon came the red permian sea-cliffs of Dawlish and the dark granite-crowned tors of Dartmoor.

The engine chugged its way up the tortuous wooded ravine of Lustleigh Cleeve, where the leaves were still of



burnished gold, to the field where the railway ends at Moretonhampstead—and suddenly I was in another world, driving along high-hedged lanes with here and there the tiniest glimpse of miles and miles of open brown and purple moorland.

We turned in at a gate, and I had just time to notice a clump of firs and an emerald golf-course, before we drew up outside the great oak doors of a long gabled Jacobean mansion of greystone on a knoll above a winding river. I had arrived.

The time was three o'clock on a December afternoon.

I recall long corridors of panelled oak, a centrally heated bedroom with stone-mullioned lattice windows out of which I looked across the Bovey river to the naked moor beyond.

I could wait no longer.

I ran downstairs, down three tiers of stone terraces, across the clear peat-brown water below, into the beech wood beyond. I took the steeply ascending lane on my left, stopping now and then to marvel at some small wayside flower that had managed to survive the long autumn, and at the giant sycamores, beeches, and elms that had their roots in these hedges.

At a farm called Yard, where moss-covered stone mounting-steps still stood under the ancient oak tree, I turned right-handed.

One horse in a cart, accompanied by a labourer and two shaggy sheep-dogs, passed me. Otherwise, I met no living soul.

The lane, which was just broad enough for the cart to pass, almost immediately afterwards narrowed to a tiny bridle-path with granite boulders on either side to form the nucleus of its banks.

On and on, and up and up, and round and round it climbed and wound, and ever and anon at a gate I would look back and see the giant hotel away down in the valley and the great tors of Dartmoor coming into view all round. The wind which had been strong all day rose now to a gale. The rain which enshrouded the highest peaks came sweeping over the lower slopes towards me, but I didn't care. I was on the fringe of Dartmoor, and I meant to earn my complete freedom of the moor even if it entailed being soaked to the skin and lost in the dark.

Above me on the left rose the slopes of Easdon Tor, the summit of which only just falls short of 1500 feet.

I deserted the bridle-track. I climbed over a wall and made a bee-line for the top, over the heather, the bracken, the furze, the whortleberry bushes, the peat moss, and the rounded granite boulders half hidden in the undergrowth.

The shaggy moor ponies grazing among the rocks looked startled. The moorland cattle were less impressed. Rabbits scuffled, and here a snipe screamed as it zigzagged away from under my feet.

I made for a great boulder.

Triumphant, panting, wind-swept, and drenched, I reached it only to find that it was not the top. I gave one look back at the oncoming storm and ran the rest of the way. I refused to be beaten on the post.

When I reached the actual cairn on the top I was blown clean off it again in spite of the heavy stones that I was carrying to pile on to those already there.

I then lay flat on the rock and looked back over the open moor. Rain swept in great filmy sheets over the tors above Grimspound. Kes Tor and Meldon were shrouded.

The light was rapidly fading ; the time was 4.15.

To play for safety I ought to go back. I preferred to

take a risk and make a circular tour of it. So I plunged into the unknown by making for a further peak where I found myself looking down on a most wonderful granite rock shaped like a giant. I learned afterwards it was Whooping Rock. In the half-light it looked very grim and sinister.

I disturbed two eerie black flapping objects in the semi-darkness. I thought they were owls until their "krak-kraak" showed that they were ravens.

Then I became lost indeed. The valley was all round me, but I looked in vain for the tall tower of North Bovey church in the gloaming. There were dense plantations on the lower slopes that I had no desire to lose myself in in the dark.

My way became more and more impeded with ugly, ankle-spraining boulders, and the last vestige of light was going.

Then the pixies relented and led me into the sanctuary of a prehistoric hut-circle, where I paid my offering of silver and found at once a track that I could easily feel in the dark. It led me past an ancient thorn-tree, and then, to my relief, I saw the lights of the hotel far below.

Long afterwards I emerged once more on to the bridle-path, only to be immediately overtaken by a postman on a bicycle, who told me that his daily round was twenty-one miles.

But after service in the Navy he seemed to like it. I waited for him while he went into Yard to answer the notice left for him in the window.

"False alarm," he said, as he came out. "They forgot. They didn't want me."

He told me to look out for the meet of the South Devon Foxhounds (north section) on the morrow at Moreton-hampstead.

When we had dropped very steeply down to the Bovey river below North Bovey, he showed me the path along the river bank that would lead me back to the hotel.

Even in the dark I could tell how picturesque it was. It winds genially under avenues of beech trees, shady, quiet, and altogether lovely, to the foot of the hotel terrace slopes.

I clambered up these, and in a few more seconds found myself in a lofty, oak-panelled stone banqueting-hall, with oak roof and a minstrels' gallery, from which (it appeared to me) Henry Hall was playing dance music.

I settled down to a prodigious tea before a roaring fire, wondering a little at the modern miracle that makes it possible to mingle with the elemental relics of the Stone Age and yet be able in a moment to return to the most luxurious and up-to-date of modern comforts.

The Manor House Hotel is an ideal place to stay if you are my sort of person, and by that I mean a man who likes the country to be the country.

Looking out of my bedroom window, I could see in all that wide expanse of moorland only one house, and that an ancient granite moorland homestead.

By my sort of person I mean a man who can get a bit of fishing without having to drive for miles to reach the river. Here you can almost fish out of your bedroom window.

By my sort of person I mean a man who likes the chance of inexpensive hunting over really sporting country.

By my sort of person I mean a man who likes to go off early in the morning and tramp all day without ever seeing a road.

By my sort of person I mean a man who is in love with natural beauty, the wilder the better.

By my sort of person I mean a man who hates crowds and loves quiet.

It was the quietude that struck me most of all as I sat in the window-seat of my bedroom after dinner and watched the moon climb slowly above the curve of Easdon Tor. Only an owl broke the stillness. And in the early morning I woke to the quiet croaking of the coots in the lake below.

But I was actually woken by the sun streaming through the lattice window on to my bed. It lit up the whole southern sky, and the sea, below the gaps in the hills, was solid gold. I dressed quickly and wandered round the eighteen holes of the golf-course before breakfast. This course practically encircles the hotel. At the seventeenth, which lies on a cairn just above the hotel, I got a superb view of range on range of hills so extensive in all directions that I immediately sat down and drew a map of it.

To the south stood the brown slopes of Easdon Tor and the high black rocks of Hay Tor ; to the west the long, lovely hills of Hookney and Shapley above the ancient hut-circles of Grimspound ; to the north-west I saw the rock of Kes Tor that stands above Chagford, on the way to the wildest of all Dartmoor's slopes on Hangingstone Hill. Cawsand and Yes Tor were enshrouded in white mist, but all the lower slopes, like the nearer ones and the tiny high-hedged fields, were clear as a woodcut.

After breakfast I ran down the slopes, past the stone terraces, the tennis-courts, and the clipped yew avenue, to cross the rhododendron-fringed lake by two greystone bridges and the river by seven granite stepping-stones. I now explored by daylight the river-path that I had taken the night before in the dark. Within ten minutes I was at the foot of a steep, high-banked lane, with the lofty tower of North Bovey church peeping over the top. This lane came to an end near the churchyard gate.

I know the English village churches fairly well, and I am prepared to say that there isn't, in England, a thirteenth-century church restored in better taste. Its bare simplicity is its keynote. Its graceful granite pillars, its floor flagged with granite tombstones, its wagon-roof of timber and plaster with coloured bosses in the chancel, and its delicately carved ancient rood-screen combine to make it a church of ineffable loveliness, and the village just beyond it is worthy of its church. It is one of the three loveliest villages in England, as far as grouping is concerned. Its thatched, white-washed cottages occupy all four sides of a tiny irregular green, which has a granite cross and many fine trees.

At one corner, hidden away in a green courtyard of its own, stands the whitewashed "Ring of Bells", with the name "Eliza Coleridge" over the door. The old lady of eighty-five, who looks after this inn, is as picturesque a figure as the inn she owns.

North Bovey is a village to loiter in and, as the Manor House Hotel is in its parish, you owe it a visit anyway.

But there was a meet of the South Devon Foxhounds, newly formed northern division, advertised in Moreton-hampstead at eleven o'clock ; so a little before that hour I was in the market-place, admiring the grizzled faces of the foot-following farmers and the quality of the horses. You have to be strongly mounted to cope with these steep hills and the almost insurmountable banks that hedge these rough fields.

A field of about forty moved off to Howton Cross to try the first covert in rough bracken. Failing to find there, hounds were cast all along the side of the hill leading to Uppacott Cross, above which a dozen mewling buzzards wheeled in play. Then, as I got to the summit of the great prehistoric earthwork hill-fort of Cranbrook Castle, I got

my best view of the day. It must be one of the most extensive views in Devon.

White mist still enshrouded the tops of the distant purple moor, but the white houses of Chagford and the deep ravine of the Teign, below Scorhill, leading up the Wallabrook, was plain and clear-cut. Close below me lay the steep brown sides of Fingle Gorge, with the flat roof of Castle Drogo and the tall church tower of Drewsteignton rising on the further side. R. D. Blackmore, I remember, described Fingle Gorge as the finest scene in England. Away to the north, over thousands of tiny fields of wine-dark red and vivid green, I saw the slopes of distant Exmoor just holding up the grey sky. The sun lit up here and there a village, a meadow, and a wood. It shone on the roofs of Chagford and on the pink of the huntsman below me in the brown bracken. It lit up the blackness of Hay Tor and the undulating country of the east.

It was a heaven-sent day for seeing, but no fox appeared to test its scenting qualities, so I descended to a narrow lane to rouse a brown owl and more buzzards on my way to Moretonhampstead.

I know Dartmoor well, and I have proved over and over again that the only way to sense its age or to appreciate its beauty is to explore it on foot or on horseback.

It is therefore essential to make your headquarters actually on it.

I have explored it from all sides and stayed at one time or another in nearly all the villages on its rim.

This was my first visit to the Manor House, and in a few hours I had discovered two superlatively good walks, one over Easdon Tor and one over Uppacott to Cranbrook Castle.

These two walks are within the range of anybody,

however little used to walking, but there are two others for those who really wish to penetrate the heart of the moor, for which the Manor House is ideally situated.

The first is by way of Yard, thence over Shapley Tor, diverging there south to explore the famous prehistoric circle of twenty-four stone huts at Grimspound, thence working by way of the disused tin-mines to the one hedgeless road that crosses the heart of the moor, on which you will find the ancient "Warren House" inn, with its peat fire that has never been allowed to go out. This stretch of road from Teign to Tavy is generally acknowledged to be the most picturesque in all England.

The second walk is much more arduous.

You start by way of Hele, go along the Princetown road to the junction of the Chagford, then make over Chagford Common to Fernworthy, where a track will take you past a fine stone circle to Teignhead Farm, the most isolated house I know, thence over White Horse Hill to the most desolate land in the West Country, the boggy two-thousand-feet-high plateau where rise the Dart and the Taw, and here you will find the pole that marks Cranmere Pool, where there is an aluminium box containing letters which you are expected to take away with you and post, leaving in your turn others of your own.

Here, better than anywhere else, you get a sense of Dartmoor's size. It covers nearly 300,000 acres and it feels all that as you look on this immense boggy highland plateau stretching endlessly away in every direction.

You come back by way of the tall pole that marks Hangingstone Hill, and so over Watern Tor to the Walla-brook, which you can follow to its junction with the Teign, and thence descend to Chagford, one of the moor's most delectable villages.



And here you will probably be glad of your car. I used, as a boy, to walk from Chagford to Cranmere in two hours, but you will be wiser to give a full day to it.

You will find the Manor House an ideal centre for fishing both the Bovey water and the Teign, for exploring Lustleigh Cleeve, the charming village of Manaton, once the home of John Galsworthy, Becky Falls, Bowerman's Nose, Hay Tor, and, of course, Widecombe.

In the height of summer you will find the Manor House a pleasant retreat from the sometimes embarrassing popularity of other moorland centres. This wild country demands solitude for its true appreciation, and along the shady banks of the Bovey you can ensure getting it.

The sea is easily accessible by car, and you have the choice of bathing in the quietude of the freshwater pool in the hotel grounds and of the less quiet but lovely sandy beaches that abound all along the South Hams.

You have a golf-course at your doors, and if you want to go farther afield a rich choice of golf-courses on the sand-dunes of the south or north coast.

But my main feeling about the Manor House is that I want to use it less as a centre from which to explore the whole West Country than as a comfortable country house, where I want to "stay put" for a month or so every year.

It has magnificently preserved the country house atmosphere which makes you want to enjoy yourself just pottering about the grounds which are, indeed, very difficult to leave.

It is no good my trying to describe the scenery. It is the very cream of Dartmoor, and Dartmoor unquestionably (from the point of view of colour and contour) contains the cream of English scenery.

In spite of its wildness it is essentially a friendly country.

Legend and superstition are rife everywhere ; but the legends are good-humoured, the pixies mischievous but not malign.

It is a grand country for the lover of wild birds. Nowhere else in England is there such a wealth of buzzards. Nowhere else in England are the hedges so richly various in wild flowers. Nowhere else in England are the country people more spontaneously friendly.

It is inconceivable for a native to pass without giving you a salutation and some kindly comment.

Nowhere else in England is the air more health-giving. The hotel stands seven hundred feet above the sea, and the combination of softness with freshness in the air is quite remarkable.

It makes for energy and it makes for sleep.

But its first and final claim to our attention is its accessibility to beauty ; beauty of woodland, beauty of moorland, beauty of water, beauty of hedgerow, and beauty of domestic architecture.

It makes an instant appeal to our aesthetic sense that is not to be resisted.

Looking back on my many varieties of holiday, I have come to the conclusion that my happiest have always been those where I have had the companionship of water. To trace lonely and wild streams to their source is one of the major pleasures of life.

On Dartmoor and from the Manor House there is an almost inexhaustible variety of moorland streams to track either down to the soft, rich, wooded country towards the sea, or up to the wild, grim, haunted, prehistoric land of the hill-tops, where grow no trees but where your way is rich indeed in memories of your most remote ancestors in stone avenues, clapper bridges, kistvaens, cromlechs, dolmens, circles, and untouched granite tors, where you may

slough all the burden and worry of civilization and recapture contact with the natural man in communion with actual beauty in its most prodigal and indeed awe-inspiring mood.

And when you have roused the black-cock from your feet, heard the curlew call from the marshlands, and felt the rush past of the "Whisht" hounds, I think you will agree with me that in no land is your reward richer for the effort entailed.

## THE HONEYMOON HAUNT

EVERY AFTERNOON, AT 3.30, THERE LEAVES PADDINGTON Station one of the most romantic trains in the world. It is known as the Honeymoon Express.

Just as every newly married New York couple goes dashing off to Buffalo to see Niagara Falls, so most newly married Londoners dash off to scramble above the Valley of Rocks at Lynton, or bask on the golden sands of Torbay.

And the instinct in both countries is sound.

On his honeymoon, a man wishes to see the beauty that he has just made his own set in the most beautiful surroundings. He wants to share the earth's loveliness with the lovely creature who has just sworn to share with him both the best and worst of whatever may betide. And he wishes to reach this objective in the quickest possible time.

There are, of course, people whose idea of a honeymoon is going round the picture-galleries of Florence, or the British Museum, but I don't think you or I belong to that category.

Our first desire is to be free of houses and free of other people, to get the sensation that all the prodigal loveliness of the world was created just for two people, to find some approximation to the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

You get the idea ?

Beauty in quietude is what you are looking for, and there are two things to be said about that. First, it isn't at all necessary to go beyond the British Isles to find it. But it is worth taking a good deal of trouble to find the exact

place which is going to suit all your needs. It must be beautiful. It must be quiet. It must be accessible and yet give you the feeling of being very far away. And—I hope you won't look on this as an anti-climax—it's got to be comfortable.

You may be quite content to live in discomfort and penury when you've settled down, but on a honeymoon there should be a certain gallant recklessness, a sense of excess. To see one's partner counting the change in his hotel while on honeymoon would make me believe that he would soon be counting his kisses.

So make up your mind to be comfortable. It is perhaps a sad thought, but it is certainly a true one, that however madly in love with you a man may be, he will still have time to appreciate well-cooked, appetizing food, to distinguish between good and bad wine, and to be mollified by efficient service as he will be angered by inadequate attention.

I hope you see now that the planning of the honeymoon is at least as important to your happiness as the planning of your trousseau.

Well, where shall it be ?

I should go to an island, and I should fly. The actual act of flying, symbolic of freedom and light and loneliness, is exactly fitting to a honeymoon. You there get at once that sense of inaccessibility and aloofness from the rest of the world, that sense of being alone together which you so much desire.

I'm only suggesting a short flight. I needn't stress the delight of flying to the Isle of Wight or the Channel Islands. Their beauties are as well-known as those of West Country beauty spots. But I do suggest that you may well find a foretaste of heaven in the Isles of Scilly. And I don't care how you get there. If you don't like facing that

short flight from St. Just, you may go from Penzance by sea. And that in itself is a most delectable adventure, because you will find yourself committed to forty miles of Atlantic Ocean in an unbelievably small steamer whose main function is carrying flowers. You will find it refreshing on your honeymoon to be treated by the ship's company as less important than the pheasant-eyed narcissi. It will give your husband a chance to restore his self-esteem.

There are few sights more romantic than that of little, low, unknown islands rising out of the sea to greet you.

And the Isles of Scilly never lose their romanticism. They are sweet-scented, colourful, and, except when the wind blows, serene. There are about a dozen of them, all within easy reach of each other, which gives you the excuse to spend your sunny daylight hours pottering about in boats pretending that you want to get somewhere.

How large would you like your honeymoon island to be? St. Mary's, the largest of the Scilly Isles, is only two and a half miles long, and one of the others is little more than a mile, and the average population is less than a hundred. So you aren't likely to be cramped.

Better still, take a sleeper to Aberdeen and from there fly over the Moray Firth and the Pentland Firth to Orkney.

That'll give you a sense of adventure and remoteness, and you'll get plenty of opportunity in Orkney to be by yourselves. Indeed, if you wish it, you can have an island to yourselves. For in the Orkney group there are about a couple of dozen islands to choose from, and the contacts you will make with the islanders will be delightfully original, for the Orcadian is charming, witty, and very intelligent.

Or perhaps you prefer the mysterious, musical-voiced fey Gaels of the Outer Hebrides, who are so shy of strangers

that they fade wraithlike away at your approach and blush if you wish them good morning. In Lewis and Harris you may well become fey or "pixilated", too ; for on these destitute moors, where the tracks are almost impossible for motors, you will have only the gannet or the pounding of the Atlantic waves against the cliffs for company.

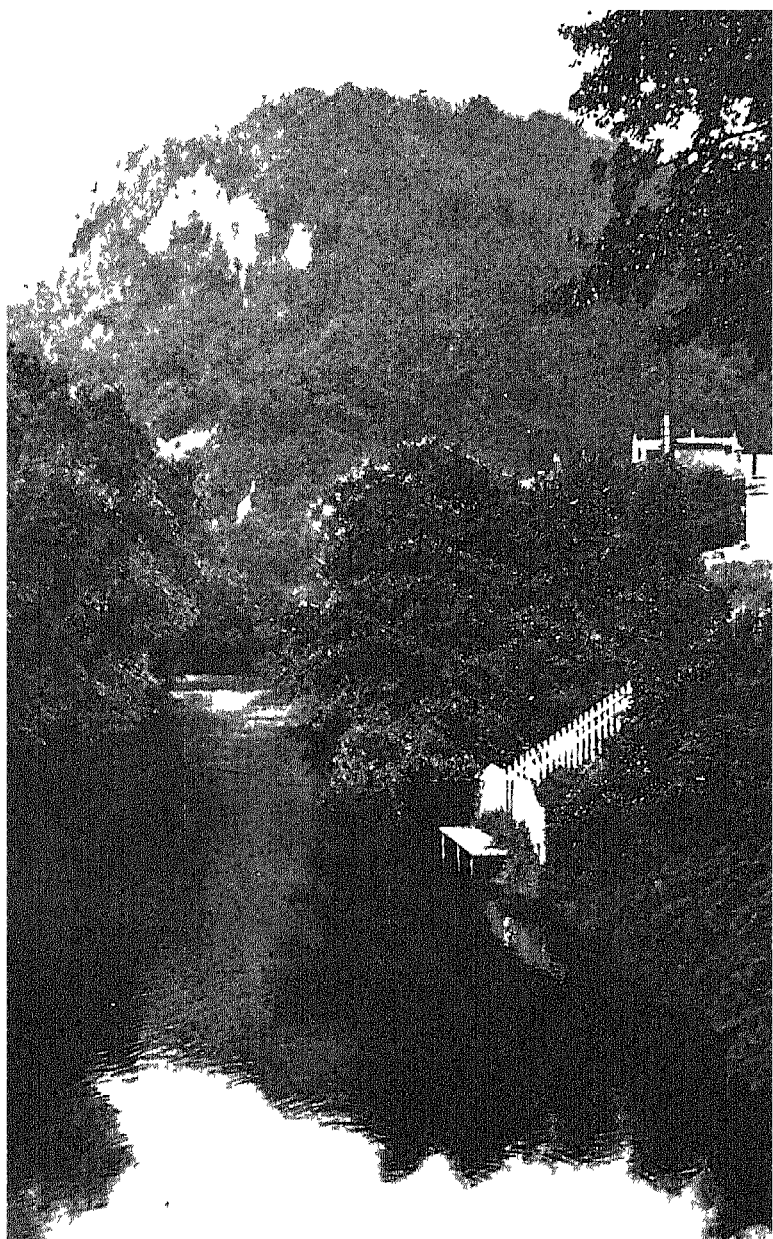
But the inns in the Western Isles are simple, and you must not expect the luxury of the Ritz west of the Minch.

You will have realized by now that my bias is strongly in favour of islands—and, indeed, wherever you choose in Great Britain, you are going to be islanded, and the presence of water adds immeasurably to the loveliness of the scene.

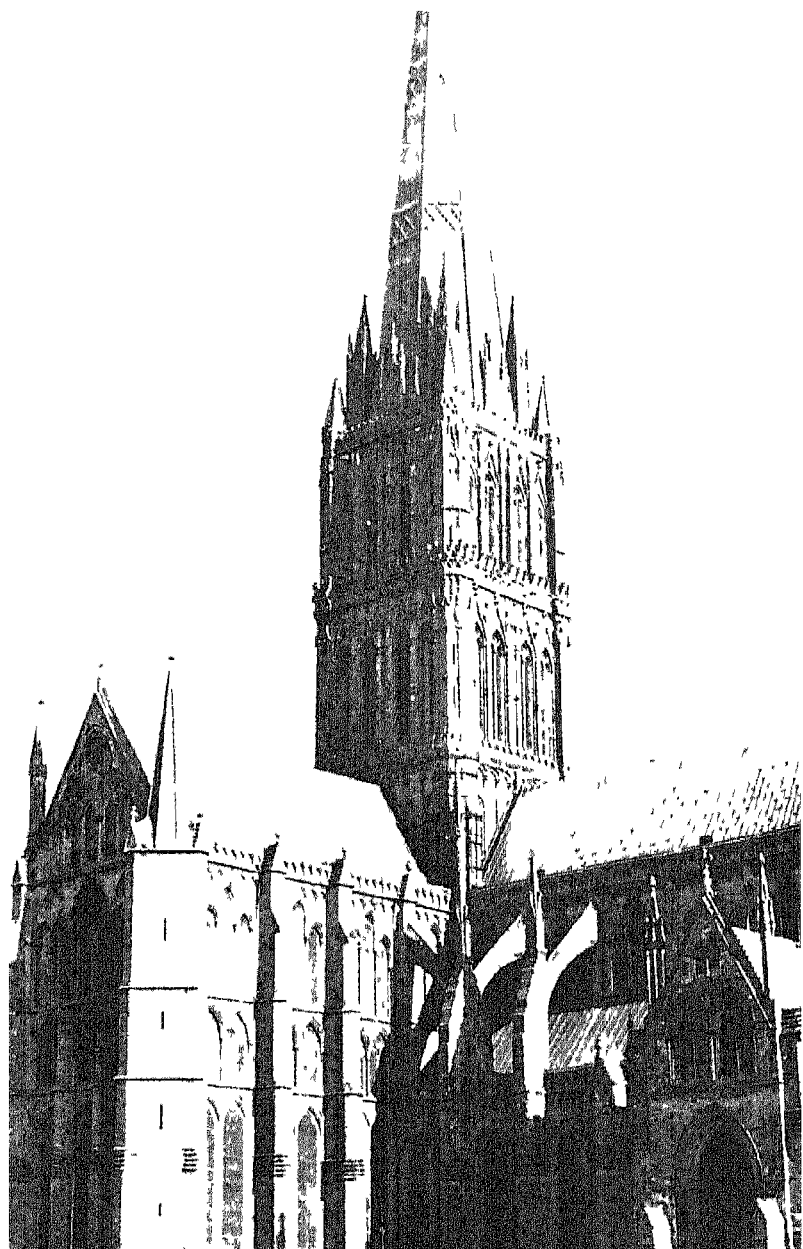
But you may prefer this water to be inland. So why not go to the Lake District and make your headquarters the "Anglers'" Inn at Ennerdale ? This is right off the beaten track, a lovely house set on the extreme western edge of the most western lake ; and if you and your husband wish to be strenuous there is an almost inexhaustible variety of hill-walks to be got in scenes of ever-changing beauty.

I believe that an unforgettably lovely honeymoon could be had by exploring Exmoor and the Quantock Hills on horseback. The joys of riding after the red deer over Exmoor are, of course, well known, and you won't find richer combes or wilder hill-tops in England.

So mark down the whitewashed, thatched-roofed "Ship Inn" at Porlock, or the lovely old converted rectory at Selworthy, now known as "Crossacres". Here you will find comfort indeed. The Quantock is even lovelier, and perhaps the best bit of open moorland free for riding left in the West Country. As a centre for this you may stay at Alfoxden, the very house in which Wordsworth once lived, at the foot of Holford Combe. A simpler but very satisfying inn is the "Lethbridge Arms" at Bishop's Lydeard.







A much rougher moor for riding, but even better for walking, is Dartmoor, and in the village at Chagford you will find inexhaustible beauty. Below lies the winding Teign, a paradise for anglers, loiterers, and bathers ; above stands the wild, open moor, where you may ride or walk freely over two hundred thousand acres, which is surely enough freedom even for a honeymoon couple.

You may prefer a gentler England. Have you ever noticed how lonely the canal banks are ? If you want complete privacy, hire a coal-barge—as I once did—and meander through Shropshire and Llangollen along the canal. You don't have to bother about hotels, but you do have to bother about cooking. Or try walking down the Thames from its source along the green meadows of Gloucestershire to Lechlade, where the "New" Inn will give you all the comfort you desire.

So much for water.

There remains the Roman Wall of Northumberland, a magic, mysterious land of Border castles, tree-fringed Tyne, and wild, treeless moorland. Here the best centre is the "George" Inn at Chollerford.

And much nearer home there is the soft, inviting country of the chalk downs. Many wise honeymooners with little money and less time to spare have found "Paradise enow" in just wandering hand in hand over the soft, springy turf of the seaward downland that runs westward from Eastbourne into Hampshire, putting up for the night at one or other of the many simple village inns that lie in the weald below.

And even lovelier are the broad open chalk downs of Berkshire, where you may walk from Goring over the Uffington White Horse and right round to Marlborough and Devizes without meeting any living thing except hares and sheep.

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*Salisbury Cathedral*

## THE RIDGEWAY

ON EASTER MONDAY I BROKE LOOSE AND CAUGHT THE 10.45 train from Paddington to Savernake. I expected it to be full of walkers bent on exploring the forest. Instead, I had a carriage to myself, and as the train passed through Kintbury I saw my first swallows of the year dipping and skimming over the surface of the Kennet.

At Savernake I was the only passenger to get out of the train. I went on to Marlborough by road, and I was the only passenger but one in the bus. As we drove through the forest I saw numbers of picnickers sitting by the sides of their cars, and an unnecessary amount of litter betrayed the fact that they were picnickers unaccustomed to country manners.

After a quick lunch in Marlborough, I hired a car to take me to Hackpen Hill. It is only about half a dozen miles out, but it lies on the broad green track of the Ridgeway, and I wanted to walk along this track north-eastwards to Barbury, from which I hoped to see the White Horse Hill of Uffington, and so link up old associations.

When, however, I got to the top of Hackpen, I found that the wind was blowing from the north-east and very cold, so I changed my mind, turned my back to the wind and my face to the sun and started walking along the ridge to Avebury, where I had agreed to pick the car up again in a couple of hours or so.

But there is some magic about the Ridgeway that never fails to lay me under its spell. I walked for a little way along this ancient green way, looking down on the dim and misty vale on my right and over the chalk cups of downland on my left, thinking of prehistoric tribes and Roman legions on the march, until I came to a haystack where I sank down and thought with pity of those uncomfortable hordes who had elected to spend their all-too-brief holiday wedged tightly on the Brighton front.

I was only about seventy miles from London, but I might have been seven hundred. I was absolutely alone, surrounded by beauty and ineffably happy.

Larks sang above me. There were cows chewing the cud somewhere unseen, and from the valley rose the laughter of children. There was a lovely mingled smell of hot hay and hot gorse, and I felt an almost overwhelming desire not to descend to the workaday world.

This desire was further accentuated by the sight, at the end of an avenue, of a thatched cottage that I found to be empty. It bore the number 95, which struck me as odd, because there was no other human habitation in sight for miles. It was flanked by trees and it looked out on a duck pond and a wide green avenue of ancient stones. Its windows were blocked with pieces of old newspaper. Rabbits scurried to and fro among the undergrowth.

I sat on a fallen tree and tried to figure out how much it would cost to live there.

Then I walked on in a sort of dream, and found myself in an immense field, and my track getting dimmer and dimmer though the stone avenues increased.

On my left, through the trees, I saw a large house and, being uncertain of my way, I went towards it to see how near I was getting to Avebury. A small boy on a bicycle

told me that it was Manton, and that Avebury lay over the downs right-handed.

"Very rough going," he added.

I suppose he thought I had a car hidden away, for nothing could have been less rough for the feet than this green track. So I turned back and made straight across as he directed ; but "straight across" is a misleading direction when you have no track and no compass-bearing. I then remembered that I had a map, but it helped me very little.

I found myself in the middle of a number of grey sarsen stones which looked like sheep lying down, but which were actually part of the famous Grey Wethers. Then I looked back at my desirable cottage and decided it must be Glory Ann Barn, or was it Totterdown ?

In front of me rose a wide belt of trees crossing a hill in front like a battalion of soldiers in column of route. Parallel with it ran a white road which ended abruptly on the downland. I made for that, passed a belt of trees at its beginning, omitted to ask a labourer at work in his garden if I was right, and on passing over the crest of the hill was mystified to find myself looking down on a succession of villages, and to hear the hum of very busy traffic.

I thought that I was at Winterbourne Monkton, and found that in reality I was at Fyfield. It is quite extraordinary how easily I can lose my bearings, even when I walk with a map. I was on the Great West Road, with cars whizzing past at the rate of hundreds a minute. I was certainly not going to walk to Avebury. Luckily there was a telephone box, and very soon my driver picked me up and drove me back to Avebury.

Avebury may or may not be the most picturesque village in England. It is certainly well in the running. But I do

not think anyone would deny that archæologically it is quite easily first among our homeland villages.

I went to the thatched "Red Lion" to order eggs for tea, and then wandered down to the church, which has a fine perpendicular tower and traces of Saxon work, particularly in the font. Close to the church is Avebury House, a Tudor gabled stone manor house of very great beauty, with a stone circular dovecot.

On the opposite side of the road I found some giant monoliths in a field, with huge grass ramparts and, on the further side of the inn, another vast field with more grass ramparts, deep ditches, and great stones, reminding me of Maumbury Rings in Dorchester.

Realizing that I had an interest in ancient things, the driver drove me back by way of Silbury Hill, which stands close by the side of the Great West Road. This is the largest artificial mound in Europe, and there used to be a ring of sarsen stones round the base. My driver told me that its sides had been excavated, but all I found in climbing it was a deep sort of dew pond filled with litter.

On the steep quarry sides on my way down, however, I picked my first cowslip of the year. It is a strange thing, but nearly every year I hear my first cuckoo, see my first swallow, and pick my first cowslip on the same day.

## THE CAVE

MAN'S DELIGHT IN CAVES MAY BE A REVERSION TO HIS cave-man ancestors. Whatever the cause, the delight is more or less universal.

Ever since I was a small boy I have always explored every cave that I could set my eyes on or my feet into. I began with the deserted lead-mines in the Via Gellia near Cromford. I continued with the Blue John and Peak Caverns at Castleton and Buxton. And ultimately I went six hundred miles out of my way to be rowed along the Mammoth Caves in Kentucky. Mammoth is the right word for these American wonders. You may, if you are physically capable, walk for a hundred and fifty miles underground in five different levels, and during that walk you will pass eight cataracts, three rivers, two lakes, and one sea.

Even in my short walk I crossed the rivers of Styx and Lethe, looked down the Bottomless Pit, and was rowed with bowed head along the Echo river, with dripping vaults of limestone over my head and ghostly sounds reverberating through the hollow caverns. I wandered through halls so lofty that I couldn't see the roof, even when the guide threw a flare up to illuminate it. I scrambled up from the bowels of the earth on a corkscrew ladder and squeezed my way through long, sinuous, snakelike passages called "Fat Man's Misery". I picked up a transparent crawfish, born without eyes, and a few wicked-looking toadstools.

I have enlarged upon this world-famous cavern, because a distinguished American has said of Cox's Cave that it far surpasses anything he saw in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. Now it obviously does not surpass it in size. And this is important. We are far too prone to measure beauty with a foot-rule, forgetful of the fact that to be stupendous is not in itself to be beautiful.

Words, particularly in scenic description, should be used as colours are by good artists, exactly and correctly. It does neither natural phenomenon any service to say that Cheddar Gorge is grander than the Grand Canyon. It may be more satisfying to certain tastes. For my own part, I regard the Grand Canyon as the most amazing and awe-inspiring spectacle of Nature that I have ever seen. And I do not regard Cheddar Gorge as either amazing or awe-inspiring.

On the other hand, I do regard Cheddar Gorge as completely satisfying. I have approached it from every angle, and if you have a choice of ways, come to it over the high bare tableland of the Mendips, for only by this route do you see its resemblance to the Grand Canyon. Perhaps the most startling thing about both Cheddar Gorge and the Grand Canyon is their complete unexpectedness. At one moment you are driving along a pleasant upland road, bordered with limestone walls, then the road winds slightly downwards much in the way that the railway gently seems to subside before entering the Severn tunnel.

Imperceptibly you thread your way round many S-shaped bends, and each time the fields on your right and left rise a little more steeply, stealing a little more of the sky but, oddly enough, not shutting out the light. The word "gorge" in the minds of the majority usually connotes a dark, if not damp, tunnel.



There is nothing dark about Cheddar Gorge, and in all my hundred or so visits I have never seen it other than bone dry. The shining bastions rise above the winding white road to a height of nearly 450 feet, higher than the towering spire of Salisbury Cathedral. These cliffs have been cut and hewn by countless ages of erosion by water into the strangest shapes. Jackdaws flutter like burnt pieces of paper among the higher crevices. Trees perch as perilously as chamois on Swiss peaks, on ledges that appear to be as devoid of soil for their roots as the rocks are of water.

The sides of these rocks are most deceptive. Some of them rise vertically almost from the road edge to the skyline. Others fall back at an angle that seems comparatively gentle until you start scrambling up the narrow sheep-tracks.

On my last visit I made an attempt to climb to the top of the Lion and Monkey Rocks, seventy acres of rocks that soar above the disused quarry, the property for all time of the nation ; but I had miscalculated the steepness of the path and the steadiness of my head. Scrambling up on my hands and knees to a height of about two hundred feet I gave way to a sudden desire to be safely back on the road below where the passers-by looked like black ants scurrying past.

On regaining the road I was glad to join the crowds on their way to see the eighth wonder of the world—Cox's Cave. I have always envied the jolly miller, Mr. Cox, who just a hundred years ago stumbled by accident on this miracle of loveliness that stood opposite his mill.

It is, indeed, odd how often the most glorious finds are made by complete accident. It was owing to some sportsmen ferreting in the woods above the Coln that the finest Roman villa in England, that at Chedworth, was revealed.

It was owing to Mr. Cox's desire to build a coach-

house that he discovered the most lovely caves in Europe. The crowbar that he was wielding slipped out of his hands into a cavity, where he followed it, as the children of Hamelin followed the pied piper into the hillside, full of wonder, but totally unprepared for the enchantment that dazzled his eyes.

Today the enchantment is even greater, owing to the extensive excavations and the brilliant lighting. There are no fewer than seven chambers. In the first we are staggered to see how rainbow-like are the colours. Here are shimmering deposits of purest white, mingling with strands of the deep red or pale pink of iron and the green and blue of copper.

In the second chamber it is not so much the colour as the shape that excites us. Here are browned cottage loaves, miniature organ-pipes and strings of white turkeys, all formed by the relentless droppings of water that petrifies at the startling rate of one inch in a thousand years.

In the third chamber the stalactites suspended from the roof are seen reflected in a crystal-clear pool that give the figures the appearance of delicate wraiths.

The fourth chamber contains a stalagmite of deep red, rising from the floor like a mighty redwood tree. In the fifth chamber we reach the "marble curtain", the delicacy of whose folds is so delicate as to make all sculpture look puny and artificial by contrast. It is ribbed as perfectly as any leaf. It hangs like a gracious mantle from the shoulders of a Madonna. The nearest thing I can find to it in the world of art are the hands painted by Albrecht Dürer. Its semi-transparence adds immensely to its loveliness, and its boldly beaded edge gives it the appearance of embroidered tapestry. The perfection of its folds is accentuated by the vivid contrast it presents with the grotesque figures that stand nearby: the Fish's Fin, Duck's Head, Mermaid, the Fat Goose, Mummy, and Lion's Claw.

In the sixth chamber the stalactites, having pleased our eyes with their delicate contours and myriad colours, now charm our ears with their harmony, for the "Belfry" group give us the opening bars of "John Peel".

We end our journey in the Lady Chapel, a fitting climax of exquisite fairy-like figures reflected in natural pools. And as we regain the dazzling white cliffs outside we rub our eyes. Did that marble curtain really exist, or were we mesmerized by the mystery of the cavern?

Beauty, as I said before, bears no relation to size. Certain beauty is absolute perfection. It comes but rarely in a lifetime. Helen of Troy's face, the acting of Duse, the sonnets of Shakespeare, Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, the Hermes of Praxiteles, and the marble curtain in the fifth chamber of Cox's Cave, Cheddar.

These are things that are immortal, as imperishable as the spirit of man. Happy is the man to whom is vouchsafed the vision of any one of these, even for an instant.

It was when I saw the marble curtain that I understood the American's statement that Cox's Cave surpassed anything in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. It has no peer in the world. The sight of it passes into the treasure-house of the memory as one of man's richest experiences.

## THE LAKE

I ESCAPED NORTH THIS YEAR ON THE WEDNESDAY AFTER Easter. It was chilly : there was snow on the Pennines as I came to Lancaster. But there were evening shafts of sunlight over the Langdale Pikes when I reached Windermere that made me forget the cold entirely.

At 9.30 on the following morning I left Windermere with my host, the headmaster of the grammar-school, to make a tour of the western end of the Lake District.

I ran into hail and snow and blackness, but the larches wore their new robes of yellowy-green, the tiles and walls of the houses were of a bluey-green, the fields were of yet another shade of green, and all the world was obviously at the spring.

I was in no mood to tarry at Nab Cottage to visit the shades of de Quincey or Coleridge, and still less did I wish to dally with relics of Wordsworth at Dove Cottage. Our first stop was at the Druid's Circle above Keswick, and once again I got a proof that our earliest ancestors, with their unerring eye for beauty, had placed their temples in the very shrine of beauty.

I searched for some spot to bring my silver offering for the pixies. I buried my offering, prayed my wish, and passed on to Keswick, thence over the grey bridges of Grange to the further side of Derwentwater, and so to Brackenburn, where I got a glorious view across Derwentwater of the Lord's

Isle and Friar's Crag. And then I turned into the vale of Newlands, a land of green-roofed, whitewashed farms set among a few trees, of wayward stone walls as if a child had scrawled irregular black lines on a green slate. Hills with dark, steep screes rose ahead, notably the oddly named Robinson. I followed by the side of a beck up the mountain pass to the top of Eskdale, where I sat on the hillside and ate a hurried luncheon, my attention divided between a croaking raven in front and a sweeping storm of hail and snow which whitened the whole land.

I then drove down the steep track to green Buttermere, and along the side of Crummock Water, at the top of which I turned south to Loweswater, a happy sheet of onely water, where I got a sudden and lovely view of the mountains of Galloway across the Solway Firth.

I was now free of the lake hills, and in the land of the derelict iron-stone mines. I drove through Rowrah, Frizington, and into Cleator Moor, where distress is so bad that over ninety per cent of the population are out of work, and on till I was back in the lakes again and having tea at the "Angler's" Inn, on the western shore of Ennerdale, the treeless lake standing at the foot of the Pillar and Kirk Fell, which, to my mind, is the most attractive of all the lakes.

In the first place, it is not on a high road. All day I had seen groups of walkers, but, at the "Angler's" Inn, there was no one, and the tea was first-rate, the eggs quite unforgettably newlaid, the rum-butter almost alcoholic, the strawberry jam home-made, and the cakes of infinite variety.

The hump of Mellbreck greeted me as I came back to Crummock Water. Later, the fine line of the Grisedale Pikes came into view as I climbed the Whinlatter Pass, and soon I was looking down on grey Keswick, and across Bassenthwaite to black Skiddaw and Blencathra in the evening light.

On our second day I drove again by way of Keswick to Borrowdale, which is easily the most picturesque of all the dales by reason of its river and trees and crags.

After the two grey bridges of Grange I came to white Rosthwaite, from where I climbed up the rough track to the top of Honiston Pass and made my way up an old railway line to the wheel hut under Grey Knotts, where I got a grand view of Buttermere and Crummock Water, and, a little later, of the whole winding water leading into the lake of Ennerdale, with the great Pillar and Kirk Fell and Steeple rising impressively in front.

Blue smoke rose from below where swaling was in progress. In the far distance I could see across the Solway Firth to the mountains of south-west Scotland.

Then I passed over a shoulder of Grey Knotts and saw the great black, steep corries of Great Gable, with snow lying just under its brow like a white moustache.

The stones that strewed the path were of all colours: some green, some red, some blue, some pink. There was much white, dead, rank grass. I scrambled nearly to the top of Green Gable, and had to drop again about three hundred feet before the final climb up loose boulders to the summit of Great Gable, 2949 feet. It is the easiest mountain of that height to climb that I know, and one that gives the greatest reward, for from its top one can see all the main peaks of the lakes. Across the Sty Head Pass lay the Scawfell group all sprinkled with snow, then the two ears of the Langdale Pikes, the mass of Fairfield, and Helvellyn.

Immediately below is Wastdale, with its screes so steep that as they drop into the water they look like the hem of a skirt.

There is a cairn known as the Westmorland Cairn just below the summit, where one gets a glorious view directly

down on to the Naper Rock below, Sty Head Tarn at the head of the pass, and the fearsome crevasse on the opposite slopes known as Piers Gully. There appeared to be sea on three sides of me as I looked out beyond the lakes below to the distant shining water.

The descent to Sty Head is steep and mainly on loose scree, and then comes a long walk down the pass, by way of Scottley Bridge to Seathwaite.

Then came the famous black, ancient yews of Borrowdale, and so back to Seatoller, where I had another magnificent tea of newlaid eggs, rum-butter, honey, and freshly made cakes.

On Saturday I explored for the first time in my life that part of the Lake District that lies in Lancashire.

I started as usual by following the road to the north end of Windermere, and then turned past the Roman fort in Borrans Field to the Furness Fells and Tarn Hawse.

The main interest to me of Tarn Hawse was not the black, still, shining water on which the Lakeland folk skate, nor even the light-green larches and dark-green pines that fringe its banks, but the lovely sound of two curlews calling to each other over the water.

The fells hercabouts are irregular humps filled with brown bracken and grey boulders, very like the country near Oban or parts of Galloway.

A steep and narrow road led down to Coniston Water, but I did not get out at Coniston, going on instead up Yewdale to the foot of Tilberthwaite Ghyll, a most beautiful ravine, in places rather like an Isle of Wight chine, running past some disused Westmorland slate-quarries which have been tunnelled, and then by a series of wooden bridges which cross and recross the narrow ravine above the tumbling, crystal-clear water, made to look green by the stones in the bed of the beck.

Young green ferns were just beginning to put forth their first fronds. The rowan tree was just in its first glory of foliage, and the sides of the rocks were covered with wet moss or light-green lichen.

About a mile up I found a fine cave running under a waterfall, and a little above a number of disused copper-mines with both vertical and horizontal shafts. I badly needed a torch and a rope. These copper-mines were worked in Roman times.

I came down on the other side of the beck and passed a great number of gnarled and ancient yews that clung affectionately to and scrawled over the precipitous rocks.

There was an excellent view of the Fairfield group of hills, Red Screes, High Street, and Ill Bell.

It was a cold day, but by hurrying I managed to eat our sandwiches out of doors before going on to Chapel Stile, a village of great individuality, and the top of the Langdale Valley. I then turned and went over the hill to Grasmere in order to see Wordsworth's cottage, but birthplaces and homes of the great dead are, to me, as empty as their graves.

On Sunday it was hazy when I set out from Windermere, and when I left the car at Fell Foot Farm, Little Langdale, it was dark over the fells. And, though my host swore that it would not rain, within a hundred yards of leaving shelter it started, and it rained the whole day, not heavily, but icily.

I first climbed the long Roman track to the top of Wry Nose, where there is a tall stone with "Lancashire" hewed on one side of it and "W.I. 1816" on the other. This is the boundary stone where the three counties of Westmorland, Cumberland, and Lancashire meet.

There was a fine view down the Duddon Valley, giving



something of the feeling of Glencoe. It looked as if the sun were struggling to come out over Cockley Beck, but when I reached the White Farm it was still raining and the fells were shrouded in driving mist.

After a glass of milk I set off up the zigzag track that leads over the top of Hard Knott Pass, and a much wilder lot of rocks on my right came into view as I reached the summit.

Once more I descended a rough track to the Roman fort that overlooks the valley of Eskdale, and I was tremendously impressed by the wildness of the view from the camp.

I stood on the edge of a high rock and looked down on a steep scree interspersed with a russet bracken that glowed in the rain like a fire.

Southward, Eskdale was a brilliant green and cultivated, but on the upper side it was much wilder and grimmer.

I ran over the fallen walls of stone that marked the boundary of the fort, gazed into the deep sentinel posts at the four corners, and then, facing into the wind, moved up the mountain pass.

For my next visit I chose July and had the great good fortune to stay in Windermere with one of the Lake District's wildest enthusiasts. From my bedroom window I looked over the waters that Arthur Ransome has immortalized for children in *Swallows and Amazons* to the cat's ears of Langdale Pikes that change their shape, colour, and distance every time you look at them.

Early the next morning I allowed myself to be persuaded to bathe in the Lake of Windermere before breakfast.

The bathing-place lies at the foot of a pleasing knoll of Queen Adelaide's Hill.

I felt deeply appreciative of this knoll because the black





waters of the lake were so cold and my friends were so long in dressing that I spent the time of waiting, not in looking at the lake, but in running up and down Queen Adelaide's Hill.

After breakfast I drove by way of Troutbeck, one of the pleasantest greystone villages in England, with its inn of the "Mortal Man", past the island knoll of Ill Bell and the little inn below Red Screes at the top of the Kirkstone Pass, down the long Llanberis-like ravine that leads past Brothers Water to Patterdale and Ullswater.

I climbed through Glencoin to Stybarrow and from these heights took the first photograph I ever took with a Leica camera. I was intensely nervous because I have a gift for pressing the wrong button and know very little about cameras.

I drove on under the shadow of these trees that fringe the lake to Gowbarrow. This itself is a national park in miniature, for it extends over 750 acres, includes the famous waterfall, Aira Force, and harbours a herd of wild red deer, which I spent most of the day looking for, in vain.

I spent a very happy day on Gowbarrow Fell feeling almost as if I were back in Scotland, smashing through the tall bracken in search of stags and walking up the wooded glen full of silver birches in search of the Force.

I found two bridges across the ravine, the lower, a narrow packhorse bridge with a stone testifying to the effect that it was put up in affectionate remembrance of Cecil Spring Rice, G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., Poet, Privy Councillor, H.M. Ambassador to the United States during the Great War.

While I was still wondering whether I dared risk the Leica on the grand cascade of water that was sweeping down the narrow dark gorge, two bands of excursionists, mainly foreign, titupped into my quietude, clicked cameras, clacked tongues, and volubly strode on.

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I felt that Gowbarrow had not really revealed itself to them. I went off higher up on the fell and lay among the bracken looking out over the unruffled surface of Ullswater until they had disappeared, leaving as little trace as a noisy blustering wind.

I drove on under the shadow of Blencathra to the grand Druid's Circle at Castlerigg, a circle of fifty stones situated in a nine-acre field on the old Penrith road.

And so I came to Keswick, where tents and gaudy college blazers testified to the holding of the Annual Convention.

Just before reaching Bassenthwaite I turned left and climbed under the lee of Lorton Fells over the Whinlatter Pass down to Lorton Vale, and so by way of Mellbreck to Loweswater in order to see Loweswater Hall.

I was disappointed in the Hall, but enchanted by Loweswater, which is remote, small, unfrequented, and fringed with trees.

I lay in a field opposite a deserted white cottage, ate my sandwiches and sunbathed, to the delight of many cows, for the rest of a cloudless July day.

When I was fully saturated with the sun I retraced my steps as far as Crummock Water and Buttermere.

Crummock is so called from its shape, which is that of a cromock or sickle.

On the northern slope of Melbrake is a lozenge-shaped, whale-backed hillock called Peel, which was converted into an island by the digging of a ditch on the sides unprotected by the lake.

I stood at the far end of Buttermere and once more tried my luck with the Leica by trying to take a photograph of the masses of haystacks and Grey Knotts with a foreground of trees.

I then wandered up the side of Gatesgarth Dale Beck to

the Honister Pass and marvelled at the number of walkers who were doing the same thing. Two stalwart young men, stripped to the waist, carrying great packs on their backs, startled a crowd of navvies working on the road into ribald laughter.

Most of the other tourists were from motor-coaches and were to be met for tea at Borrowdale, which gave them a simple but very profitable walk among the mountains.

The vast quarries two thousand feet up on the side of the hill are very impressive, particularly because of the "Crack of Death", the wind that suddenly sweeps through and down the gullies making a noise like the crack of a whip as it flings great hunks of slate about like a pack of cards. You can see the trolleys and the entrances to the caves, but men can only be seen when they move.

I dearly wanted to climb up to the Hawse and then once more join that old much-loved and often-covered track that leads by way of Grey Knotts and Brandreth to Green Gable and so to the summit of Great Gable.

There is an inscription on a stone placed at the very summit to remind one of the dead-and-gone climbers and of the stern rock-faces that they loved, and the stupendous view that they enjoyed. It is the easiest three thousand feet climb that I know, and the reward is out of all proportion to the effort entailed.

Once on the top of the huge inverted bowl all Lakeland seems to unfold itself to you. Immediately below is Wastdale, with its treeless screes dropping into the water with the steepness and appearance of a crinoline skirt.

Scawfell and the Pikes rise fearsomely on the other side of the narrow ravine of Sty Head Pass below.

And over them one looks towards Bow Fell and Conistone Old Man, and a little further south to the pricked-up ears of

the Langdale Pikes. But it is as much in her water-effects as in her distances that Great Gable scores.

Here I felt as if I were on the rim of a badly chipped bowl with a windy gap here and a windy gap there, and below, as if escaping from the bottom of the bowl, the waters leading into the green hemmed-in valleys that end in the shining lakes of Ennerdale, Buttermere, and Crummock Water.

From here it is possible to get a bird's-eye view of both the Ennerdale group and the Scafell group.

The Ennerdale group includes the Pillar Mountain, Pillar Rock, Steeple, Haystacks, and Red Pike.

On the other side of the Sty Head I could see the summit of Scafell Pike (3210 feet), the highest point in England.

This is the nearest approach to a national park that I have so far achieved in Great Britain.

As I retraced my steps along the shores of Buttermere I had a look at Nether Howe.

I then turned up the steep, winding road that runs above Sail Beck and stopped at Newlands Hawse under the mighty shoulders of Robinson and looked out on the red screes of Grassmoor.

Newlands Hawse is ideal ground for a picnic on a warm day, for it is pretty well in the centre of the best scenery that can be reached by car.

But on this day it was too cold to linger, so I crossed the watershed and went bowling down the side of Keskadale Beck to Keskadale Farm, where I was given a grand tea of eggs and currant jelly, and all sorts of cake and rich cream, and read Wilson's *Shepherd's Guide* and learnt how sheep are recognized by croppings on the near ear, "red popson near hook", and another on the head.

There is a grand vista from the clearing in the road at Brandelhow Park of St. Herbert's island, and it so happened

that on this summer evening there were many sailing-boats and rowing-boats on the lake, manned, I presumed, by members of the Convention. Steam launches were chugging along, carrying the lazier Convention followers.

My driver was interested in telling me how a Chinaman had brought his bride here and murdered her on her honeymoon. He showed me the exact place where her body had been discovered.

As I crossed the lovely grey double bridge at Grange I stopped to watch an abortive fisherman who pointed out to me the fine sentinel of Castle Crag in Borrowdale, a hill standing nine hundred feet high guarding the entrance.

On the opposite side of the road stands Grange Fell and the Borrowdale Birches. These 310 acres of the exquisite "Jaws of Borrowdale", together with the Bowder Stone, extend from the river Derwent to the top of King's How (1363 feet).

I drove all along Borrowdale to recapture the early thrill of seeing those wonderful birches above the Derwent and of seeing again the white cottage of Rosthwaite, where I used to pretend to read mathematics and really climbed in undergraduate days.

I had forgotten that there was such a luxurious hotel or that Rosthwaite cottages were so picturesque. It is an admirable centre for those who don't mind staying in the valleys.

I drove on up to Seatoller, where men were in the process of building a huge youth hostel.

The charabancs were waiting for the walkers that I had left climbing Honister.

Seatoller is a better centre than Rosthwaite for the climber because it is at the junction of the ways to Styhead and to Honister.



But it has the unenviable reputation of holding the record for the heaviest rainfall in Great Britain, about 150 inches, I believe.

There are many people who put Borrowdale as the loveliest of all Lakeland dales, and, so far as its trees are concerned, it is surely unrivalled. My objection to it is merely that it makes me feel shut in. It is a glorious place to pass through, but I can think of many places in the Lakes where I would rather live.

On the way back I climbed Grange Fell and mounted the Bowder Stone, which is just a gigantic boulder with a ladder against its sides and a visitors' book that is about as much use as most visitors' books in places where there is always a mob. I was more interested in a couple of Lakeland terriers playing under the Bowder Stone. It was the first time that I had taken any notice of them as dogs, and they struck me as a most fascinating breed of terrier.

We drove along the eastern shore of Derwentwater and again left the car to walk through the property of Stables Hill and Broomhill Point, a very jolly walk under trees by the side of water.

I found it possible to walk all the way long the lake-side to the famous Friar's Crag, which, together with Lord's Island, is a memorial to the late Canon Rawnsley. The Ruskin monument also stands on Friar's Crag. The little island of Rampsholme is used as a landing-place for picnic parties.

This is an exquisite pleasure and deservedly popular. Half the Keswick Convention seemed to have found its way there by the time I arrived. There were three jays on Friar's Crag, not in the least discomposed by the crowds, many of whom had brought books to read and letters to write.

Through the pines I looked out on lovers in boats and lovers walking with intertwined arms in the grey-blue of evening.

I read Ruskin's comment on this scene :

The first thing I remember as an event in life was being taken by my nurse to the Brow of Friar's Crag on Derwentwater.

This brow is about fifteen feet above the water, so those who come expecting a precipice are likely to be disappointed.

The thinly covered roots of the trees have been worn bare and stand up like veins on a hand. That is the only objection to Friar's Crag. It is almost too popular.

The next day I began with Ambleside.

In Borrans Field I met two unemployed miners who had slept the night there on their way from Carlisle to Barrow. This is the site of the Roman fort, Galava, on the shores of Windermere. The remains have been excavated. The notice that faced the hungry unemployed was "Granaries".

In Ambleside itself I met two women from Detroit turning over antiques in the old Bridge House—a seventeenth century house built on the crown of the bridge that spans Stock Hill Beck.

The most conspicuous house on the west shore of Windermere is Wray Castle, a mock Gothic, castellated ugly mansion, let to the British Freshwater Biological Association. The land of sixty-four acres belonging to the castle is wooded and beautiful, and provides a landing-place for boats and camping-sites for Scouts and Guides, both of whom were using it during my visit.

They had chosen an unpropitious moment to pitch camp, for a heavy thunderstorm which had been threatening all day, broke over us as I drew up at the castle ; otherwise, I should never have spent any time rambling through the

cheerless rooms of the castle which seem admirably suited for one of Hollywood's more lavish settings in Hungary or Spain, but oddly out of place in the Lakes.

The castle was used as a youth hostel for a little time. The view from the grounds over the lake towards Windermere gives a better idea of the extent of the lake than any other view I know.

I drove on to Hawkshead Hall courthouse, a pre-Reformation building that has been admirably restored by Mr. H. S. Cowper. The Boy Scouts of Hawkshead use the courtroom, which has exceptionally stout oak doors.

The courthouse is really a sort of gatehouse to the Hawkshead Old Hall, a white farmhouse.

This is one of the loveliest parts of all Lakeland.

Standing among the bracken on Tarn Heights I looked across Coniston Water and Esthwaite and Windermere and saw the thunderstorm break over Helvellyn and clouds gather round Bow Fell and the Langdale Pikes.

Just below me among the dark pines and fresh green larches lay the shining small tarns that are so like Loch an Eilean.

Three hikers in shorts came quickly past, suddenly paused at sight of a grasshopper, and were convulsed with laughter at its antics.

There were three girls slightly in rear of the men who called out :

"We've found a grass'opper. 'E—'e—'e—'e. We've found a grass'opper. Look see."

"Oh, I say !" said one of the girls.

"Well, I never !" said a second.

"I've never seen a grasshopper," said a third.

I sent the car on and ran down St. Mary's Glen, a steep, boulder-strewn beck among trees glowing by my side.

Soon after rejoining the car I came to Yew Tree Farm, which has a grand covered gallery, where they used to spin coarse straw into halters. In the barn that contained the gallery there were six beams, and the fleece of sheep hung everywhere. The walls were unmortared.

I drove on to Tilberthwaite Ghyll, a place of heather and foxgloves, where a steep path goes up beyond an old slate quarry on to the mountainsides, where are old copper-mines.

But the Ghyll itself is magnificent, a succession of narrow, deep ravines with fine waterfalls and ancient yews clinging to the precipitous rocks.

I drove on to Coniston where, in the "Black Bull", a man in a green collar and red tie played the cornet to me for more than half an hour. His tunes were mainly of the period "After the Ball was Over", and he played piercingly and loudly.

As it was early closing day I experienced great difficulty in sending off a telegram, but, by some clever backstairs work and making friends with a number of children, I did manage to establish contact with the outer world before going on to explore Coniston Water.

After a long drive down the eastern bank past Ruskin's house at Brantwood, I came to Nibthwaite.

There is a jutting-out piece of land forming a tiny peninsula, almost an island hidden among trees, and here I came upon a little bay with a boat riding at anchor and in a secluded dell a little way from the beach a caravan and a tent.

It was a wholly unexpected find, and, as the clouds passed over, revealing a scorching sun, I stripped and sun-bathed on the shores of what I took to be Peel Island.

It was a charming, secluded spot, out of the view of

anyone, except to my astonishment a steamer shaped like a gondola that caught me unawares. I vanished into the water and swam round the tiny bay. Then, when my visitors had vanished, I again lay out on my beach in a semi-doze.

This little copse, with its oaks and rocks and hidden bay, seemed cut out for the band of adventurers that manned the *Swallow* and the *Amazon*, but that was on another lake, and except for this single pleasance, I think that Windermere excels Coniston.

I drove on round Spark Bridge over Kirby Moor by winding, narrow roads to the sandy estuary of the Duddon, which, to me, is the loveliest as well as being the most remote of all Lakeland rivers.

I looked down on the Great Hall through the grounds of which the river ran, and then passed through Broughton and Ulpha and by the old-world "Newfield Inn". The road became narrower and wilder and the valley more and more like Glen Affric, the watercourse covered with vast boulders and the trees thinning. At last, after many gates, I came to Birk's Bridge, a narrow, greystone bridge overlooking a deep pool, with a girl and a man in it swimming as quietly as otters.

It was like the Wallabrook on Dartmoor, just shining pools and boulders.

After a succession of small farms and more gates we came under the shadow of the mountain and at Cockley Beck came to the last farm at the head of the Duddon Valley. The land attached runs the whole length of Wrynose Bottom to the three Shire Stones and takes in the summit of Carrs (2500 feet).

The walk up the Langdale Valley over Wrynose, down the Duddon to Cockley Beck, and across the arched bridge and up over Hard Knotts to the Roman camp of Hard Knott

Castle above Eskdale, is one of the finest in England. The rough track will take a motor-cycle or Morgan, but very rarely will any owner risk a car. It is essentially a walk, not exhausting but pleasantly strenuous.

The last time I did it the Lakeland friends with whom I was staying assured me that it could not possibly rain that day. All the signs were against it. It never stopped raining.

I talked to two girls and a boy at Cockley Beck Farm, who told me that they have to drive six miles in pony and trap every day from Cockley Beck to Scathwaite to school.

I stopped at "Newfield" Inn on the way back for a drink and fell over a number of sheep-dogs in my anxiety to inspect a carved oak dresser inscribed "T.F. E.F. 1724".

The next day I went by way of Cockermouth to explore the westernmost parts of the Lakes, and as I got on to the high ground above Lamplugh I saw the Galloway Hills across the Solway Firth and, to my intense astonishment, straight over Whitehaven, twenty-seven miles across the sea, also saw the peak of Snaefell, the complete outline of the Isle of Man and, far, far behind it, a faint grey line where the coast of Ireland or the Mountains of the Mourne rose from the coast of Ulster.

My objective was the far end of Ennerdale, partly to re-establish contact with the "Angler's" Inn, which is quite rightly more a resort for honeymoon couples than for fishermen. It is one of the most comfortable, one of the brightest, and one of the quietest hotels I know.

All roads end here, so I wandered on to a crag over the middle of the lake and again stripped and lay out on the soft mossy grass and looked up at the Pillar and Windy Gap, and the Steeple, and the River Liza flowing through green land into the lake under the high hills.

It was so clear after the previous day's thunderstorm that every rock and stump of tree stood out on the other side of the lake with precise definition.

After my sun-bath I ran down through the long bracken and dived into the black depths. I had the whole lake to myself, the sun above and no noise under heaven except the distant bleating of a lamb.

Much refreshed and with a prodigious appetite, I wandered back to the "Angler's" Inn, where I had a grand tea of eggs and whortleberry jam.

On the way home at the top of Newlands Hawse I again lay down in the heather and watched four cars in succession fail to take the steep slope and come to rest with explosive noises, while their occupants ran hither and thither for water.

## A DAY WITH THE HIKERS

EVERY SUNDAY MORNING OF THE YEAR, WHATEVER THE weather, you will see groups of young men and girls set out from all the English big towns on bicycles, by bus or train, to spend the day in the country.

The Englishman's love of the countryside is as instinctive as his love of his home and family.

He is only reconciled to working in a town if he believes himself able to spend his leisure hours in the country. Hence this regular Sunday exodus. You see it best, perhaps, at the railway stations.

Here the walkers or ramblers collect about nine o'clock, waiting for the trains to take them beyond the suburbs to the quiet countryside, where they may wander at will over the fields and through the woods.

In order to encourage this the railway companies run special trains to specially beautiful places at a very much reduced rate, with the result that for half a crown or three shillings anyone can buy a day-return ticket from London to some quiet pleasance forty or fifty miles away.

In addition to that he meets on equal terms numbers of other young people of similar interests with whom to share the beauty and the air.

Come with me on one of the excursions and I will show you how English youth spends its Sunday.

The scene is Victoria Station on a rather cold, grey



March Sunday morning. The London streets are deserted.

The platforms of the station are crowded with an eager, chattering mob of some six hundred ramblers as gay as they are diverse in their clothes.

There is no sort of uniform for walking in England. Here is a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl in a Scots kilt and blue blazer, here a brunette with a red scarf, black polo jersey, and flaming-red skating-skirt. Many of the girls wear shorts. Very few wear stockings, though they are all sensibly shod. Some of the men look to me rather over-shod. Here's a fellow with an alpenstock and heavy, nailed climbing-boots. As he is also wearing a Tyrolean hat and check knickerbockers he looks more suitably clad for the mountains than a gentle English ramble, but half the fun of these jaunts lies in dressing-up in clothes as different as possible from those in which one works.

That is why nearly all these boys and girls are hatless and the girls walk in bare legs. It is all an expression of the free spirit of youth.

Most of them carry haversacks on their backs containing mackintoshes, maps, sandwiches, a change of socks, a flask, and perhaps a book of poems or a pack of cards. But they are, for the most part, too sociable to have recourse to the book or game. They will spend the greater part of the day talking and comparing impressions. Before they gather on this platform they may never have met, but the proximity in the railway carriage breaks down all barriers. You need never be lonely in London. All you need to do is to join a hike and you'll make friends at once.

The excursion on this Sunday is southward to the long range of smooth, green chalk downs that rise above the Sussex coast for about seventy miles from Eastbourne to Hampshire.

As soon as the train starts guides come round the compartments with a list of the day's choices.

Quite obviously six hundred people can't walk together, nor would they want to. It would, for one thing, be difficult to find accommodation for them in any country inn, and they would be too unwieldy to control. So you find yourself first asked which of two stations you would like to get out at, and then which of eight or nine groups you would like to join.

The distances to be covered on foot are not large. The shortest is ten, the longest twenty, miles. And as some seven hours are to be taken over it, there will be plenty of time to loiter and enjoy the view. Nothing robs a walk of its charm so quickly as having to hurry or to keep up with the too-active.

The group-leaders remind you not to leave field-gates open, or to stray too far from the foot-paths or in any way to leave the country the poorer for having walked over it, either by damage or the careless and inexcusable leaving of litter.

The train starts, soon leaving behind the suburbs and the threatening rain. The skies clear. The hedges seen from the carriage window are freshly green, the banks lined with yellow primroses, the gardens festooned with the new pink of almond-blossom, the chestnuts in the woods beginning to bud. Everybody feels the call of the spring.

The time is 10.59. The train pulls up at the little country station of Hassocks and everybody jumps out, gesticulating, laughing, on to the platform and into the station yard, where each of the leaders raises aloft his yellow wooden banner inscribed with the number of his ramble and, having now decided which walk suits you best, you stand under the banner waiting for the whistle to blow to move off.

There is, of course, no obligation to join any group at all.

Having paid for your railway ticket you are at liberty to wander off by yourself or with your own chosen companion and lose yourself in the countryside for the day, so long as you catch the special train back at 6.9, when, in any event, the daylight will have gone.

The clouds are dispersing, the sun is shining brightly as we of number eight group under our leader set off over the meadows for the green, bare knoll of Wolstonbury Hill, rising some six hundred feet above the weald about a couple of miles away.

It is very gentle walking, this South of England walking, very like the people who live here, who are sunny-tempered, great lovers of quietude, slow in movement, unchanging in outlook, and very friendly. There are foot-paths everywhere, but they are used less today than they used to be, for the farmer and his family now go everywhere by car.

But nobody in his senses would walk along a road. For one thing it hurts one's feet, for another it is extremely dangerous, as motorists do not expect to see walkers.

After a few fields we begin to climb up the sides of the free chalk downs. Here are no paths. You just walk or ride wherever you like. The downs are only used as pasture for the famous Southdown sheep. Overhead you can hear the sweet song of the lark who never leaves the downs the whole year through.

There are grand splashes of colour among the green. First the dazzling white of the great chalk pits, then the yellow of the great clumps of gorse and the subtler interchange of sunlight and shadow over the smooth green rounded heights. You look down on the wooded valley and find to your surprise a haze of delicate blue fading into a pearl grey. Everybody stops to breathe in the pure air coming up from the sea, to gaze over the scores of miles of open

country, to stretch their arms as symbol of the sense of perfect freedom in a scene of pure loveliness.

It is difficult not to give vent in some way to the ecstasy that suffuses us.

Hazlitt used to leap and sing. Some of our number lie down and hug the sun-warmed mossy earth for sheer joy. Later, this green will be carpeted with millions of minute, multi-coloured, sweet-smelling wild flowers and the swallows will be twittering as they dip over our heads, but this is the time of year when we seem to need the downs most. We wonder, as we wander along in this warm, bracing air, over these pleasant ridges, how we can ever bring ourselves to go back to the cramped greyneess of the towns. This is so obviously the right life to live, unhurried, slow, deliberate, with time to absorb beauty, and beauty at every turn waiting to be absorbed.

This was where man lived when life was at its simplest, and man tilled his own land, lived, loved, bred, and died among his own small community in scenes that were part of him.

We are apt to forget how much the spirit of man in the past owed to these downs. Here is truly the rock whence we were hewn and the pit from which we were dug. The longing that we feel to get on them and the ecstasy that suffuses us when we reach them are only to be explained by the long continuity of our ancestral links with them.

It is only in these latter days that they are left to the shepherd and his sheep, the lark, and the wheat-ear. But they are the quickest way I know to recover a sense of the long past. Their rounded shapes are of eternity. They give one a sense not only of beauty, but of eternal peace. They are the great consolers of the distressed spirit as they are the inspirers of gaiety among the youthful.

As the afternoon wears on you find the groups sorting themselves out into smaller and smaller sections, talk becoming more solemn and less. People tend more to walk by themselves and let the silence speak to them.

The light changes, the green grows darker, the bare branches of the beech trees blacker, the lines of walkers ahead more indistinct. Lamps flicker in the windows of distant cottages in the valley and stars begin one by one to take shape in the sky overhead.

It is the gloaming, and once more we descend to a tea already ordered for our group in some farmhouse or inn, a meal of great satisfaction, for we are healthily tired, very hungry, our minds full of little odds and ends of lovely groupings of trees and hayricks and barns and churches and downland curves.

And later, refreshed, we walk in the darkness, a lovely time for walking, just a mile or two before we regain the train and sleep the whole way home.

Sometimes we walk the whole night through. Once I took 1440 ramblers over these gentle downs to see the moon set and the sun rise. The English climate is not altogether reliable, and the weather reports frequently fail us. We saw neither moon nor sun, we got very wet and very cold, and yet every one of those ramblers said that he enjoyed the experience.

Sometimes we go further afield and spend the whole week-end walking. To encourage this the Youth Hostel Association have instituted a chain of hostels where any walking member can put up for the night for a shilling and either cook his food for himself or have his food cooked for him.

It is quite easy to walk the length and breadth of England, Wales, and Scotland and spend every night of the tour in

one of these hostels. Many a walker prefers just to ramble haphazardly and put up for the night at the nearest farm when he is tired of walking. The advantage of that is that he meets the farmer on level terms and has his meals with the true countryman.

The point to remember is that all England is free to the walker. He will meet with encouragement everywhere. He will find that walking is the quickest way to make friends, whether with other walkers or with the people whom he encounters on the way.

Walking is the cheapest way of seeing England. It is also by far the best, for by walking without plan in what Shakespeare called the foot-path way, you will find the old England untouched by modernity. You will have the old green tribal tracks and Roman ways to yourself and find companions whose outlook derives directly from the most ancient of days.

Nowhere will you be regimented or turned back. Everywhere you will find yourself met with kindly, smiling faces and encouraged to go forward to share the unforgettable loveliness that is the English country heritage.

The secret is to go slowly, to amble, and to talk to everybody.

## A DAY WITH HOUNDS

ON ALMOST EVERY WEEKDAY IN AUTUMN, WINTER, AND spring in nearly every English county you will find a meet of the foxhounds.

You will see reports of the runs every day in *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, and on Saturdays you will see the list of the meets for the forthcoming week. As there are about 150 different packs averaging four meets a week, each one attracting an average field of a hundred interested sportsmen, you can reckon that about 60,000 people get out with hounds every week. Fox-hunting is easily the most popular sport among the country people, and as all English people are countrymen at heart, it means that a love of fox-hunting is instinctive in the race. And this is not surprising, for it is at once the most colourful, exciting, healthy, and economical sport known to man.

Come with me and I will show you an average day's sport.

The meet is at eleven o'clock, or in late March eleven-thirty. It may take place on the lawn of a great country house, or on the village green, outside a railway station, or in a market-square.

The meet we are bound for takes place at the "Fox and Hounds" Inn in a very small village in the Weald of Sussex. On all the roads converging on this village you will find, after ten o'clock, a steady procession of motor-cars, cyclists, walkers, horsemen, and horse-boxes.

We like to arrive about half an hour before the meet in order to have a gossip with our friends.

Inside the low-ceilinged, three-hundred-year-old inn are grizzled farm-labourers in corduroys, smart young women in bowler hats and black riding-habits, cavalry officers in pink coats, top hats, and white hunting-breeches, farmers in hunting-caps, long brown or black hunting-coats, and leather gaiters, other farmers in caps, and exquisitely groomed young men in Homburgs and lounge suits accompanied by young girls in furs and silk stockings, all gossiping away over their tankards of beer, waiting for hounds to arrive.

Outside, are mothers with babies in their arms and small children by their side, chauffeurs standing by the long line of cars that are drawn up by the side of the road, the village parson, the postman, the blacksmith, grooms taking horses out of the horse-boxes, and a quickly increasing field of riders ; from eighty-year-old squire in an old beaver hat and hunting-coat that is green with age, to that eight-year-old girl in jodhpurs, whose flaxen curls will not stay under her black velvet hunting-cap and whose pony shows a strong desire to run away.

The grey-haired, limping man in beagling-kit, who has got off his bicycle is an ex-master of Beagles who doesn't let arthritis interfere with his following.

That long-bearded old gentleman in grey checks and white spats, who looks like Edward VII and holds up an ear-trumpet to his befurred wife, was a Master of foxhounds fifty years ago.

That one-legged man on crutches is the earthstopper, and if you are on foot you will be wise to follow him, for he always knows where the fox is going and will be in front of everybody else in spite of his one leg.

Now comes a rustling and a movement up the lane.



Horsemen make way and the Master, followed by the huntsman, both very smart in pink, come riding up, with twenty couples of feathery eager bitches trotting quietly at their heels, with two whips, also in pink, in the rear. Caps are raised on all sides.

"Good morning, Master."

He, smiling, takes the salute, has a word or two with the local farmers and, still smiling, allows a band of cinema operators to take a colour-picture of the scene, which entails the walking of a girl, who is rather too immaculately dressed to be a real Diana, among the hounds, who quite rightly take no notice of her at all.

A murmur of "Hounds, gentlemen, please", and we are away to draw the first covert, not just the mounted field of two hundred strong—this is a Saturday meet and, therefore, a big one—but everybody, motorists, cyclists, and foot-people.

That is one of the great joys of fox-hunting, that it suits every purse. If you can afford it you naturally ride, but if you follow on foot you see just as much sport and pay nothing. Anyone who likes can follow and is free to go over any ground however private. Indeed, if you really want to see the countryside this is the only way to do it, for you are now at liberty to cross fields and run through woods and parks, and you will be meeting the people in their natural surroundings, all at their most affable and friendly.

It is not wise to follow in a car, though many people do, for you really see nothing, but spend your time following other cars up and down lanes trying to cut the hunt off or catch up with them.

Many followers cycle, but it is not always easy to cycle over wet fields. If you are not riding, by far the best way is on foot.

It provides you with just the amount of exercise

you wish, for you may run at their heels if you are very active or walk in the trail of the hoofmarks, listening for the horn and looking out for the fox who so often tries to get back from where he started.

Well, as this pack has just moved off down the lane, let's follow them.

The cars are in a long, thin, black line wedged in the side of the road. The riders, with hats glossy as the roans and bays and chestnuts they ride, all fall in behind the field-master while the Master puts the hounds in at the osier-beds and draws down-wind.

A few of us, foot-followers, stand close into the hedge-side to watch hounds at work.

"Leu-in there, little ladies," says the huntsman. "Leu-in there," and blows short, sharp notes on his horn.

Hounds move very quietly and quickly, and so does the field, so you've got to keep a watchful eye on things or you'll get left behind.

They find nothing in the osiers, so they go on up the hedge-side and we after them, the white-bearded, white-spatted old man, and his wife gaily capering along over the plough and through the thorn hedges, the one-legged man already a field ahead, and the stalwart bare-headed girls in kilts showing a clean pair of heels over the grassland two fields away. The immaculate youths have gone back to their cars.

The real hunting has begun.

Following as close as we can, we catch up with the field drawn up alongside a corner of a thick wood which hounds are drawing.

It gives us time to greet several of the horsemen whom we failed to see at the meet: the local doctor, a butcher who also farms, a wealthy distiller of whisky who himself hunted this pack for twenty years and is now ridden with

gout, a couple of subalterns on leave, and the wives and daughters of neighbouring squires.

As we wait, more foot-people come up, a band of three grey-haired farmers in mackintoshes and caps carrying tall ash-plants, who never miss a meet whatever the weather, or separate from each other however far or fast hounds run.

Suddenly there is a whimper, a cry : "They've found", a whole rich music of hounds giving tongue, and all eyes are turned to the wood to see the lithe brown streak of the fox break away.

But he doesn't. Hounds race him up the wood, down the wood, and up the wood again, louder and louder in their tuneful music until at last we hear one long blast of the horn, and, as one man, the field of two hundred thunders over the turf, leaping the hedges and the fences and the brook that runs down the wood-side. We stand still to be certain of the direction and to drink in the glory of a field in full cry, which can only be appreciated properly if you are standing still just behind them.

But we dare not stand still too long or we shall lose them altogether. We watch them as far as the skyline, and then see which way they turn and make for that spot, following the easily discernible hoofmarks where we are in danger of losing them.

There is a peculiar sweet smell about earth that has been newly turned up by horses, and this is only one among many sweetnesss that are likely to fall to your lot if you keep on walking steadily towards the fast-receding field. There is the quietude of the woodland now that the hunt has swept past, the sight of other foxes stealing stealthily away to safety, the sea of yellow primroses under the trees, the birds singing overhead in the first warmth of spring, the green buds shooting out from every bush and tree.

You find yourself back in the very old world away from the trodden ways of man. Here are only disused foot-paths ; the trails you see are animal trails, the only ways over the rivers are fallen tree-trunks. The people you encounter are farm labourers looking out from haystacks, or pausing in their ploughing to watch the hunt go past or the fox come back. Everybody has a friendly word. Everybody tells you how far in front the field is.

And just when you are beginning to think that you can never possibly catch up with them again, you will hear the horn in the distance, and then again coming nearer, and before you realize it the whole field will come sweeping back past you and you will feel a fool when the Master asks you if you have seen the fox, for you know quite well that the fox must have seen you and passed quite close.

Then hounds suddenly pick up the scent again, and once more the field breaks into a gallop, and you turn again and watch the wild dash and the throwing up of turfs by the horses who are just as excited by the chase as any of the field.

Once more they disappear from view, then you hear hounds giving tongue in a much lower note and you realize that they have viewed their failing fox or that they are getting very near. Later you hear a long, long blast on the horn and, running now, you may be just in time to see the fox thrown high in the air to be torn to pieces by the yelping pack.

There is time then to sit on the fence on the mossy bank and bring out your sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs before the Master draws the next covert and we start out after a fresh fox.

Then, about three or four o'clock, leg-weary but infinitely contented, we begin to think of tea, take our bearings and plunge over the fields and through the woods

in search of a village tea-house, where we may sit over a warm fire and make up for the meals we have missed before making for home, a hot bath, and a blessed sleep in which we dream the day all over again.

The advantage of fox-hunting is that it is not dependent on the weather. It is just as good fun in the rain as in the sun, in the cold as in the heat. It takes you into the secret places of the countryside that you would never otherwise penetrate and reveals a loveliness that you might never have suspected.

Its mingling of colour and movement makes the blood tingle with delight, for there are few sights in the world more pleasing than that of pink-coated horsemen silhouetted against a black wood as they go galloping past, unless it be that of the long, lean, red fox darting over the wide green of an upland field. And perhaps its most attractive aspect is the friendliness that it engenders.

Everybody who follows, whether mounted or not, is one of a fellowship. It doesn't matter whether you're mounted or on foot, a millionaire or unemployed. Out hunting, all men are equal, all men are free.

It is by no accident that our poet-laureate's most outstanding poem should have for its subject a day's fox-hunting. It is the most English sport in England.

## THE INLAND SPA

(i)

### *Cheltenham*

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE HAD A SOFT PLACE IN MY HEART for Cheltenham.

I came to know it first as an undergraduate. In those days we explored the Cotswolds on foot and discovered the fact that for architectural loveliness no other villages can compare with the villages among the stone-wall uplands and treeless valleys.

If I had my way I should meet all American visitors to our country at Southampton or Plymouth and try to entice them first to visit Burford, Broadway, Chipping Campden, the Slaughters, and Stow-on-the-Wold, and I should tell them that they should make Cheltenham their centre.

They would see the true England of Shakespeare in the villages, and in the Cheltenham hotels they would be made to feel that the happiness of their visitors is the staffs' main concern.

Americans are used to good hotels, so one must be careful where one tells them to go. I have always felt that the Cheltenham hotels really do cater for the comfort of their clients, and I have a strong feeling that they must have changed considerably since Cobbett's day, for, as you remember, he describes the town as "a resort of the lame

and the lazy, the gourmandizing and guzzling, the bilious and the nervous”.

All I can say about that is that if one goes to Cheltenham lame, one leaves it whole ; if lazy, one leaves it vigorous.

Cobbett may have been right about the gourmandizing. I find that Cheltenham air gives me an appetite that is not altogether satisfied by aesthetic delight. After a day on the hill-tops I descend at eventide to eat prodigious meals.

The fact that so many Anglo-Indian families retire to the town is proof enough of its excellence. The retired are at liberty to live where they will, and they go where the climate suits them best, where rents are reasonable, scenery pleasing, the society genial, sports accessible, educational facilities sound, and, if possible, within a get-at-able distance of London clubs and shops.

Cheltenham has the tremendous advantage of being in touch with London by means of the “Cheltenham Flyer” and the aeroplane, and also in touch with the really remote countryside.

The Cotswolds separate her on the east from any possible contamination of suburbanization, while on the west lies the romantic valley of the Severn, and beyond it lie the Welsh Marches and the border.

There are certain fundamental qualities required in a modern health resort or spa to make it acceptable to visitors as well as residents. It must be cheerful, lively, beautiful, accessible, up-to-date in itself, quite apart from being within easy reach of the country that is beautiful and varied.

To one type of mind Cheltenham will call up visions of the largest girls’ school and one of the most robust boys’ schools in the land. Educationally, it certainly stands almost alone.

To another type of mind the word Cheltenham conjures up visions of the National Hunt Steeplechase, of point-to-point courses, and hunting with the Heythrop and Cotswold packs. The foxhunter will certainly find more varied country in this area than anywhere else.

Again, to the lover of our native literature and natural beauties it will conjure up visions made imperishable by the poetry of John Masefield and A. E. Housman, the prose of Compton Mackenzie and Arthur Gibbs. For it is in this lovely secluded corner of England that the Vale of Evesham lies, in plum- and apple-blossom time a dazzling world of snow-white trees that take our breath away with their sheer perfection. Here lies Bredon, the home of a "Shropshire Lad," the majestic abbey of Tewkesbury with its memories of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, the winding valley of the Wye with its ruined abbey of Tintern, the inspiration of one of Wordsworth's most moving poems.

But to regard it as only a haunt of schools, only a country for the foxhunter, and only a collection of beautiful villages in equally beautiful country, is to do it scant justice. The word Cheltenham should bring to mind every one of these things impartially.

Too many spas compress their gaiety into one all-too-short season—for the rest of the year they are just dead. I cannot imagine a sight more depressing than a holiday resort where the hotels have put up their shutters when the season is over. It is one of Cheltenham's chief glories that, like good wine, it is always in season. I have visited Cheltenham in summer and winter, at every season of the year, and I have always found it very much alive. The shops are smart, and they have the supreme advantage of having a peerless setting under a long shady avenue.

I have visited the countryside at all times<sup>of</sup> of the year,



and always there has been some new beauty to discover. It makes little difference when you explore the strange unknown Forest of Dean, or marvel at the magpie-coloured half-timbered houses of Herefordshire and the villages of Eardisland and Pembridge. At any season the cathedrals of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford are magnificent, and so is the grand vista from the Beacon on the Malvern Hills, looking out over the Black Mountains to the fastnesses of wild Wales.

But to go on cataloguing the charms of the country round Cheltenham is invidious because they really are inexhaustible and a selection wellnigh impossible. Who, for instance, after seeing Stanway and Painswick, would be bold enough to decide which is the most beautiful village in Britain? Who, after seeing the churches of Cirencester, Burford, and Northleach, would dare to say which possesses the finest architecture?

Passing through Moffat, in itself a town of no inconsiderable charm lying in the heart of a grand countryside, I saw a notice bearing the inscription: "The Cheltenham of Scotland."

I can think of no higher tribute to Cheltenham than this most sincere form of flattery.

(ii)

*Harrogate*

Harrogate is, to me, the keystone of the English arch.

It is actually the centre. It is not only exactly halfway between London and Edinburgh, John o' Groats and Land's End, and the East and West Coasts; it is also the natural and obvious stepping-off place for those who wish to see

England at its richest, historically, architecturally, and, above all, scenically.

I have known Harrogate since I was a small child, and I have never visited it without finding some unexpected and fresh delight. I am not likely ever to forget those early morning gallops over the Stray, with the keen, invigorating wind, laden with the scent of moorland heather and the sea, blowing through my hair. I am not likely to forget those strolls through the pinewoods, or those more vigorous tramps over Blubberhouses Moor to Bolton Abbey.

There seems to have grown up a most misleading tradition that all England's loveliest homes and most of her oldest families are concentrated in the south and west. In the immediate neighbourhood of Harrogate there are no less than ninety-seven old halls and castles, still owned, and lived in for the most part, by the same families who built them during or before the Wars of the Roses.

I know no other part of England to compare with Harrogate as a centre for exploration. Your objective may be the North Sea or the coast of Lancashire, the home of Wordsworth in the Lake District, the Roman Wall, or the Minster of York. They are not only all accessible, but to reach them you will inevitably be diverted from your main objective by the wild beauty of a dale, the contours of bracken-covered slopes, and the majestic isolation of heather-topped fells.

The country is infinitely varied. At one moment you are in the stone-wall country of treeless heights, with black sheep feeding on yellow wild grasses among the grey boulders of a moor-top, with very occasional grim, grey, square stone farms standing four-square to the winds—ageless; you descend through a winding gully with a bubbling beck at your side to a fair land of broad acres,

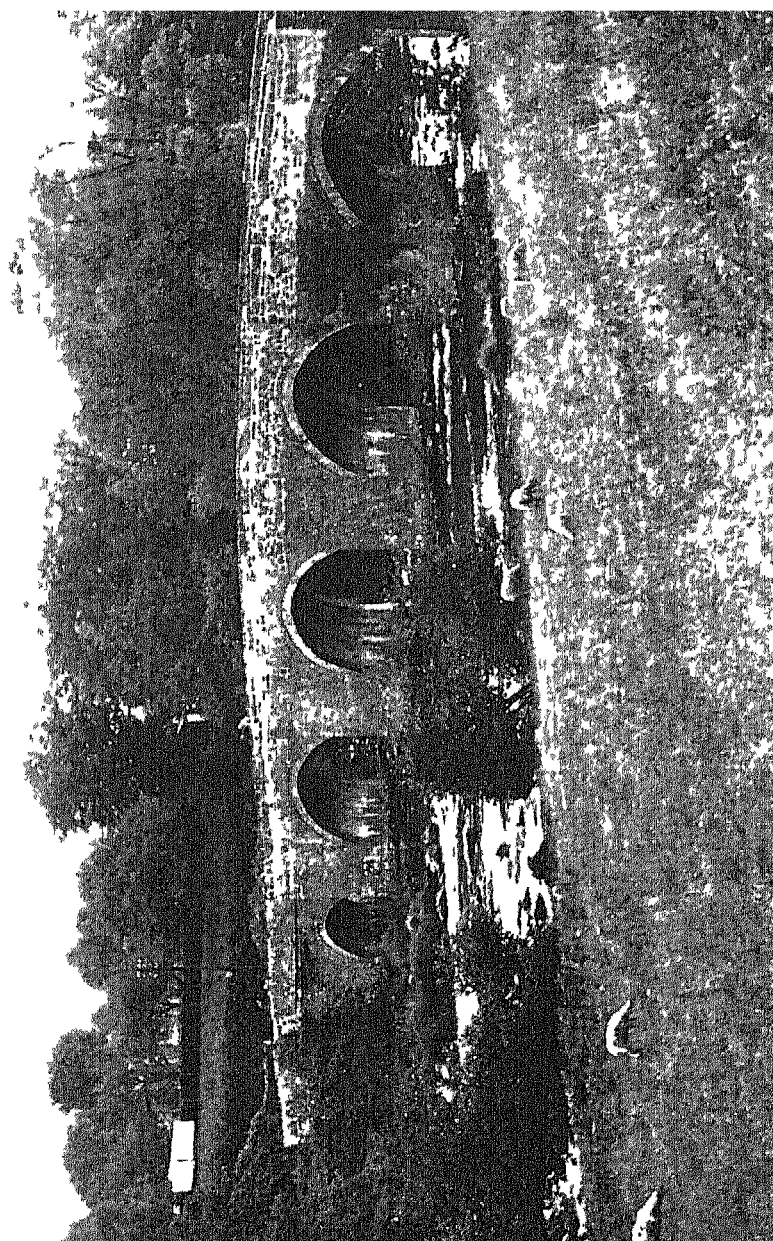
hedged fields, thick woods, and Arcadian parks. You will be wise to travel through this land slowly. The visitor who dashes up Wensleydale, over the Butter-Tubs, down Swaledale, and talks glibly of knowing the Yorkshire dales, is, unluckily, not uncommon.

It is perhaps less surprising for such a man to learn that there are 129 Yorkshire dales, than the fact that each of these 129 differs from the other in glory, exactly as each of the many "forces" or waterfalls of Yorkshire differs from all the other "forces" in glory. But, after all, you do not always visit a place in order to leave it, and you may, with some justification, think that I am stressing the glories, not of Harrogate, but of the places that are within easy reach of Harrogate.

So I will, not without reluctance, come back from my 106 stately homes, 52 rivers, 10 battlefields, 64 monasteries, 61 castle ruins, and 129 dales that are all within a few hours' drive, and tell you why I like Harrogate itself.

I like it because its leading hotels are the most comfortable that I ever stayed in outside America. I like it because its shops are good, its air magnificent, its position high on a plateau (how I hate those airless "health resorts" built in a hollow where no sun ever penetrates!), its people pleasant to look upon (the experts in these affairs who say that Nottingham girls are the loveliest in Britain must, I feel, have missed Harrogate), and, like all Yorkshire folk, hospitable and generous to a degree unknown in the south.

I like it because it is one of the very few curative places that not only pretends to cure but does cure those who take its waters. There was a time when we used to regard Harrogate as a place devoted solely to invalids. I have known Harrogate, as I have said, for a very long time, and





I have always been struck by the activity of its visitors. They may arrive in bath-chairs or on crutches ; they very quickly scamper about like young lambs.

This is no exaggeration on my part, for when I was an undergraduate I was sent to Harrogate for convalescence after a quite serious illness, and I spent four months there. I believe that I was quite cured in four days, for I spent the rest of the four months riding, playing cricket and tennis, and walking enormous distances over the moors.

Recently I have spent four days there, not convalescing, for I can no longer afford that privilege, but I arrived completely exhausted and left completely rejuvenated. It may have been the waters, it may have been the air, it may have been the sight of Studley Royal and Fountains once again, it may have been the drive through the Trough of Bowland (one of the grandest bits of scenery in the land), it may have been the Lucullan food and sybaritic luxury of the so comfortable hotel, it may have been the good looks of the passers-by in the street—I rather think it was a mixture of the lot.

The point is that there are many well-advertised health resorts in this country which apparently spend all their energy on advertising and have nothing left to spend on keeping the place alive. They may have a season, but I always arrive when that season is dead.

I visit Harrogate as an inspector visits a school, unexpectedly, and often at the worst possible time. Invariably I find it alive, jolly, reinvigorating, and sunny. The result is that my affection for it is a good deal deeper than I can express on paper. I owe Harrogate more than I can ever possibly repay, and the only point in my writing this appreciation is that I may convince those of my fellow-countrymen and all American visitors who rush madly to

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the Highlands or east and west, to pause for once and stay a night in Harrogate to relax.

I am prepared to lay odds that no one who stays a night in Harrogate will proceed on his journey without trying to find some pretext to stay longer.

Those (if any) who fail to fall under its spell will only have their own insensibility to blame, for the charm is there. Whether you are susceptible to beauty or not must, in the last resort, lie with yourself.

If you fail to fall in love with Harrogate the fault lies in you, not in Harrogate.

I am always glad to be back in Harrogate. It stands high. It makes the most of itself in every direction. Its shops are, I imagine, the most entertaining in the North of England, if antiques on the one side and smart frocks on the other can be described as entertaining.

Its hotels are, so far as I have sampled them, as good as they look. The Majestic is palatial in appearance and its food certainly up to the standard of palaces. Its visitors are variable. There is the nucleus of those who can with difficulty crawl from the lounge to the dining-room, but once there find no difficulty in tackling an eight-course dinner. The waters obviously give them an appetite, and they are a final proof of the fallacy that lies in the argument that appetite comes from taking exercise. I have never known the hardest-working farmer eat as much as these fat old women cure-takers of Harrogate.

Not all the visitors are fat and old. On Saturday nights there is a refreshing invasion of slim and energetic youngsters come in from Leeds and round about for their weekly dance.

And in the gardens on Sunday mornings and on the Stray every morning you will see girls as attractive as any in England.

But I use Harrogate not as a place to shop in or loiter in, listening to bands or drinking the waters, but as a centre of exploration.

When you're staying by the sea your walking-ground is naturally limited to what lies at your back. The best of the inland spas is that your walking country lies all round you.

I found many of Harrogate's charms by accident while following the Bramham Moor and other packs. It is a land of strange and quick transitions. On one side lies the land of the strictly preserved grouse moors, with their menacing notices of "No Trespassers" over trackless wastes of bog and heather. Here are greystone walls and gaunt greystone farms, very solid, very grim and forbidding to the stranger, belying completely the welcome that awaits anyone who overcomes his natural reluctance to seek hospitality.

On another side you get the whole rich plain of York—pastureland with hedges. Harrogate itself is actually in the Bramham Moor country, and an excellent centre from which to hunt. It is partly walled and partly moorland, with a good many woods and much plough in the south. There is no hunting at all west of the Bramham Moor, but north of it and east of it is the York and Ainsty, where every kind of fence has to be negotiated except banks ; there are some moors, but little woodland.

North of Ripon is the Bedale country, and south of the Bramham Moor is the Badsworth. There are about a dozen more packs to the east and north : the Zetland, Harworth, Cleveland, Goathland, Stainton Dale, Derwent, Farndale, Sinnington, most ancient and honourable Bilsdale, which was hunted by the Duke of Buckingham as early as 1670, Middleton, and Holderness, which is also over two hundred years old. But to the west there is nothing ; Lancashire,



which rivals Yorkshire in so many things, makes no attempt to rival her in fox-hunting. There are more packs in Yorkshire than in any other county. There are no packs at all in Lancashire.

If you are a fisherman, Harrogate offers just as embarrassing a richness of choice.

There is the Ure running through Wensleydale. Have you ever eaten Wensleydale cheese? If so, you'll never eat any other kind when Wensleydale is procurable. So bully your favourite restaurant and cheesemonger into stocking it. There are the 'Tees, the Swale, the Dove, the Rye, the Wiske, the Ribble, the Airc, the Wharfe, the Midder, the Ouse, the Derwent, the Hodder, the Hindburn, the Esk, the Leven, the Severn, the Riccall, the Eden, and the Lune, to say nothing of a hundred becks. Or, if you prefer lake-fishing, there is always Semmerwater.

Although it is on a high plateau and within sight of the wildest wastes of moorland in England (have you ever tried to cross Conistone Moor or Dallowgill?), yet it is also within easy reach, though out of sight of, the great industrial cities. It has kept itself completely uncontaminated from any of the less pleasant aspects of industrialism, and gives the impression of being the hub of a universe that is all green open pastureland on one side and all purple and brown moorland on the other.

On these grounds and on many others I give Harrogate precedence among the English inland spas.

(iii)

*Bath*

No other English city bears so unmistakable a homogeneity in architecture, no other English city has so

exquisitely and completely preserved the atmosphere of its golden age, no other English city plays you in as you approach it so magnificently, as Bath.

You emerge from the Box Tunnel, coming from the east, to find yourself in a different world, the valley of the Avon—wooded, hilly, and grandly decorated with villages of Bath stone.

The houses are tall, rectangular in design, and graciously dotted about in big walled gardens. They call up at once an age of dignity and leisure.

And when the train draws nearer you see not only a homogeneity in colour, but whole symmetrical sweeps of houses on the sides of these seven hills. The two John Woods, to whom Bath owes these imposing crescents and circuses and squares and parades, built as the builders of mediaeval churches built—to last as well as to please.

This resort of all the wit and fashion of the eighteenth century is still the resort of the wit and fashion of our own time ; but money is made as well as spent here, and its air of liveliness and gaiety is certainly not that air of enforced liveliness that one associates with spas given over solely to remedial exercises.

Bath stone, Bath Olivers, Bath marmalade, Bath chaps, and Bath corsets all manage to achieve distinction without in any way destroying the harmony of the city. Its streets are busy, its shops are distinguished, its hotels luxurious, and there is always something unusual to see and do, whether that seeing and doing is aesthetic or sporting. Its literary atmosphere is easily understandable. Every eighteenth-century author of note left his mark on it. There is the Avon to row on, the Pump Room to listen in, cricket and football in the best West Country tradition, and hunting with at least half a dozen equally exciting packs.

But I go back to Bath most often, not so much for its own sake, though I prefer it to any other city in Europe, but for its astonishing advantages as a centre for exploration.

I have long believed that Somerset is the richest county in England for variety of scenery, architecture and historical interest, and from Bath as centre I go for walks over the Mendip Hills, dropping down to explore the delicate loveliness of Wells, the grandeur of Cheddar Gorge, the mystery of Glastonbury, the magic beauty of King Arthur's Vale of Avalon, and the tragic marshlands of Sedgemoor.

And only a little farther afield are the bracken-covered combs of the Quantock Hills and the haunt of the red deer on Exmoor.

But Bath also stands on the threshold of all that is best in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Within easy reach of Bath, on the south, is the lovely unknown land that lies between Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Devizes, and Frome, while to the north the Cotswolds come almost to the city's edge.

What fine exhilarating country is that high stone-wall plateau that runs from Bath to Stroud, whence one looks over the west escarpment down to the shining silver Severn, and over the dense woods of the Forest of Dean to the high black mountains of Wales. It is a truism that in our tiny island you can find more variety in a few miles than in any other land, but to get the strongest contrast to the East and Home Counties, I know nothing like that short journey from Paddington which brings you into the very heart of the West Country.

If I could afford to live a hundred miles out of London, I should not think twice. I should live in Bath. I like a city in which I can mix my interests and turn quickly

from Osbaldeston to Jane Austen, from a golden lyric to a golden stroke at cricket, from the wisdom of age to the gaiety of youth.

## (iv)

*Tunbridge Wells*

Tunbridge Wells was "made" by Charles II. It is one of the few places with a church dedicated to King Charles the Martyr. The shades of Johnson, Beauclerk, and Goldsmith still haunt the Pantiles, but it seems to have decided that it is wiser to move with the times and become a safe suburb than to risk possible eclipse as an inland spa. After all, one can almost hear the Tunbridge Wells authorities say, who wants a spa today? The word is outmoded.

In many ways this is a pity, for there used to be a pleasant, leisurely atmosphere about Tunbridge Wells which is not to be captured again in many English towns. It has a queer natural advantage quite apart from the waters of its Chalybeate springs in its fine, almost wild moorland common, with great rocks of sandstone, one shaped like a giant toad, another like a lion, and a third like a pulpit. The country round on the southern side is very picturesque, for it contains Eridge, with its deer park and ancient woods, and beyond that the open high plateau of Crowborough leading to Ashdown Forest. I used to find it a pleasant escape from the low-lying industrial town of Tonbridge to bicycle over by way of Penshurst to the wooded hill country, in the middle of which stood this delectable spa with its good antique-shops and second-hand book-shops.

But London is laying too heavy a hand on it. When the

great majority of householders of any place are season-ticket holders to London, inevitably there comes a loss of independent individuality. Tunbridge Wells was better off in the days of Horace Walpole, when it was impossible to drag the wheels of the coaches through the mud, as they used to sink to their axles.

(v)

*Malvern*

I remember once, as I stood on the top of the Worcestershire Beacon in a thunderstorm, a strange woman came out of the blue and said quite suddenly and very loudly, not to me in particular but to the noisy heavens: "If I wanted a foreigner to see England at its most typical, I should bring him here on such a day as this."

She was right.

From this almost razor-edge ridge, on this queer day, with the lightning playing over the villages below on the west and the sun shining on a silver Severn, and the line of the Cotswolds far over the valley, dim and straight, and the grey menacing clouds breaking over the black peaks of the Welsh mountains to the west, it was true England.

There was greyness, wetness, storm and sunshine, green fields and green woods, with grey church spires and tall towers peeping out of the trees, and here the brown roofs of thatched cottages and there red roofs of tiled villas.

Malvern is astonishingly well placed because it forms an almost complete ring round the hills to which it gives its name, so you can look from the hillside north, east or west, according to your desire,

Great Malvern, the chief of the Malverns, lies a little way up the eastern slopes of the great bracken-covered hills. Here are the boys' and girls' schools, the strikingly handsome priory church, and two excellent hotels frequented by parents of children at school and pupils attending the Equitation School.

There are wells here, at Malvern Wells, a southern suburb, and Malvern waters appear on the table ; but I have seen no invalids in bath-chairs. It is not a very easy place for bath-chairs, as most of the streets are on inclines of one in three. This is a spa more for vigorous youth than for ailing octogenarians.

Seven Malverns encircle the foot of these hills—Great Malvern, Malvern Link, North Malvern, West Malvern, where there is a flourishing girls' school and a derelict spa and well, Little Malvern, Malvern Wells, and one other that I can't remember. And they all owe their prosperity and even existence to the nine-mile-long chain of hills that rise above them to a height of 1395 feet at the Worcestershire Beacon and 1307 feet at the more interesting Herefordshire Beacon, which is in the heart of an immense British earth-work. It is hoped that the whole range of the Malvern Hills will soon come into the hands of the National Trust. Midsummer Hill, the southernmost extremity of the range above Lord Somers' fine house in Eastnor Park, has been given to the nation as a memorial for his son who was killed in the War, and it would be pleasant to know that the whole of this exquisite range is safe for all time from the hand of the builder or further quarrying.

Seen from a distance, from the railway line of the L.M.S. going south from Birmingham to Cheltenham, the hills rise out of the Vale with a most imposing effect. Of all our English hills they have the most individual skyline.

(vi)

*Droitwich*

Droitwich does attract invalids, and if you've ever looked into its swimming-bath and seen the strange effect on equilibrium of its salt you won't be surprised. There is so much salt in Droitwich water that you can't sink. You just sit in it or stand in it and it holds you up without your having to swim or float. The effect is at first ludicrous, but it does afford a compelling proof that the water is salt. It is supposed to be very good for rheumatism.

Now Droitwich is very near the big Midland industrial areas, and they are as insistent in their demand for amusement as the Lancastrians. So the management have added loggias, ballrooms, and sun-bathing places, which all looks very odd in this old world of half-timbered houses. But the hotels look comfortable, and Droitwich is certainly a good centre from which to explore a most attractive and little-known country. Ombersley, for instance, the home of Lord Sandys, a village where nearly all the houses are half-timbered, is next door, and Abberley Hall, overlooking the Teme valley, is only just beyond.

From Droitwich there is grand river scenery to be explored along the upper reaches of the Severn, through Stourport and Bewdley on the edge of Wyre Forest, while eastwards there is the whole valley of the Avon from Stratford through Pershore to its junction with the Severn at Tewkesbury.

And in spring, when the apple-blossom makes Evesham look as if it were under a mantle of snow, the whole of this area smells as sweet as it looks.

(vii)

*Leamington*

Leamington, known, I suppose, to the great majority of people by reason of its orchestra which entertains us so often on the air, is not, in the invalid sense, a spa. At least, if one is to judge from the applause we hear over the air following every item of its orchestral achievement. Its taste is not eclectic, but its energy is obvious.

Many people wouldn't even think of regarding Leamington as a spa, were it not for the word occurring on the boards on the tops of the Great Western Railway Station. But this railway encourages spas. Cheltenham is usually described as Cheltenham Spa on the boards of its Cheltenham Flyer. And, anyway, Leamington's right to the title is royal, because a hundred years ago Queen Victoria allowed it to use the title of "Royal Leamington Spa". It seems ungracious to have dropped the prefix and kept the suffix. Its fame in waters is due to a Dr. Jephson, who turned an inconsiderable village into a quite considerable town.

Its waters are probably as good as the waters in any other watering-place, and I am certainly prepared to believe that they are better than the waters of Marienbad, Homburg, and Kissingen, but what is of more importance than the waters is the surrounding country. Warwickshire is almost unknown except to natives of Birmingham and lovers of Shakespeare, and its villages are second to none in beauty. Dickens knew Leamington, as did of course Mr. Dombey and Thackeray and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and where three such men chose to stay we shall be foolish not to cast an eye.

There is a Pump Room with Corinthian columns ; there are gardens to commemorate Dr. Jephson, a Linden



Walk, and an Assembly Rooms. The hotel in which Jack Mytton jumped over the dining-table and his guests and out into the street on horseback no longer stands, but the memory of Mytton is not dead.

It is, talking of horses, a very good centre for hunting. It is within easy distance of the Pytchley, North Warwickshire, Warwickshire, Bicester, Grafton, Atherstone, and Fernie country—a pretty rich choice. And in going to the meets you will pass Offchurch, Offchurch Bury, Lillington, Cubbington, and other villages of enchanting beauty, but the way that you will most frequently tread will be the canal path to Warwick, one of England's outstandingly lovely old-world towns. It is almost completely mediaeval, and even more of a piece than Alnwick. It has everything: a fine river, mediaeval town gates, gabled, crooked, timbered houses leaning over narrow, steep streets, a great church, schools with a great ancient tradition in spite of modern buildings and more modern schools with equally fine traditions imbibed from the antiquity and grace of the buildings they inhabit, and over all the shadow of a great castle.

Warwick Castle has retained all its old magnificence. It is still one of the stateliest of English homes, though it has been standing for seven hundred years, although it was demolished once in 1264.

Piers Gaveston was tried and condemned to death in the Great Hall. The Castle came into the hands of the Nevilles, then to the Dudleys. Caesar's Tower was built in the fourteenth century by Thomas Beauchamp, and in 1417 Henry V was received as guest by Richard Beauchamp. Richard III twice stayed there and Elizabeth also visited it twice. Then Sir Fulke Greville came into possession in the reign of James I and it has remained in the hands of that family ever

since. Fulke Greville entertained his King there four times, and spent £20,000 on restoring it and adding "pleasant gardens, walks and thickets, forming the most princely seat within the midland parts of this realm."

At the end of the eighteenth century a later Greville made a priceless collection of pictures, which are now always on view to the public, and gave special housing to the famous Warwick Greek vase. He also made an approach to the Castle through a solid rock, added armouries and walls, a lake a mile long, a grand stone bridge, and a hundred acres of ash trees.

The adaptations of the successive generations have blended now into a perfectly harmonious entity. Guy's Tower and Caesar's Tower stand grandly above the trees over the river, giving a rather French effect to the whole. These towers are 128 and 147 feet high respectively.

The Great Hall overlooks the river.

But there is much to see in Warwick in addition to the Castle. There is the gabled, half-timbered Leicester's Hospital, with a quadrangle, the fine tower of St. Mary's church, with effigies of a fifteenth-century Earl of Warwick, and the great tomb of the first Earl of Warwick and his wife, both of whom died in 1369, with thirty-six niches each with a figure and shields of the family. There is a pleasing memorial in the choir to a thirteen-year-old girl who died in 1636. The epitaph is in the form of an anagram: "Mistress Cisseley Puckering. I sleep secure, Christ's my King", the happiest example of an anagram I ever came across.

The crowning glory of this church is the Beauchamp Chapel, which was finished in 1475 and cost what today would have been £40,000. This contains some fifteenth-century glass, and the tomb of Richard Beauchamp, showing

him in full armour, wearing the Order of the Garter. The tomb is of grey Purbeck marble, and the effigy is all brass, exactly like a suit of armour.

There is also the tomb of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and of Lettice, his third Countess, who outlived him by forty-six years. St. John's House, St. Peter's Chapel, the East and West Gates, and the stately, lovable house where Walter Savage Landor was born in 1775, are all worth a visit. Landor's birthplace is now a flourishing and picturesque High School for Girls.

Guy's Cliff is on the way from Warwick to Kenilworth. Guy's Cliff has woods and caves and elms, an ancient chantry, a hundred-year-old house and a water-mill that goes back beyond Domesday.

The ruins of Kenilworth Castle, the property of the Lords Clarendon since the Restoration and now sold to the town, stand surrounded by a circular mighty wall in more or less open country. I suppose, owing to Sir Walter Scott's novel, it is about the most frequently visited castle in England.

And, after all, a castle that can boast of twenty-two royal visits between 1265 and 1644 is likely to hold its own in historic interest and architectural splendour with any in the land.

Poor Amy Robsart, whose ghost one somehow expects to see peering over every battlement, was, in point of fact, never here ; but Queen Elizabeth certainly was, and must, in 1575, have cost her loving host, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a pretty penny for entertainment. Queen Elizabeth was not a person most men could afford to entertain twice. But Leicester entertained her often.

The odds on the boy Shakespeare having witnessed the lavish pageantry of some of these royal occasions seem quite

heavy. And some imaginative writer has gone further and shown young Anne Hathaway appearing before the Queen as Flora, Shakespeare falling head over heels in love with her at sight and angry with the Queen for daring to rebuke Anne for her immodest dress.

But Kenilworth was great long before Elizabeth added colour and romance to its history.

The Norman Keep, built in 1170, still stands some eighty feet high, with walls fourteen feet thick, with Tudor mullions cut by Robert Dudley. John of Gaunt, in the fourteenth century, made his additions which include the roofless Great Hall with its fine windows, four to the west and three to the east, and a lovely oriel to the south-east. Along the south part of the main building stands the Tudor Castle, projecting eastwards until it reached the gateway to connect it with the Clock Tower and the Keep.

But this is only a piece of the great ruin. There is Mortimer's Tower with two portcullises, a tilting-yard which was used in Edward I's reign by the Round Table of a hundred Knights for tilting and a hundred of their ladies for dancing for the delight of Roger Mortimer, Earl of March.

Then came the water-tower, stables of rich red-and-black timber, and Lunn's Tower.

King John spent a lot of time at Kenilworth and built extensively ; so did Henry III, who afterwards gave it to Simon de Montfort, who used it as his chief fortress in the Barons' War. In 1266 it was surrendered on terms known as the Ban of Kenilworth, which became a famous pledge of freedom. The Castle passed to Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, whose son compelled Edward II to yield up his crown there.

Every King of the House of Lancaster came to visit it, and when Elizabeth gave it to Dudley he entertained her

there four times ; on the great occasion of 1575, when he entertained her for seventeen days, there were fireworks that included a dragon as big as an ox, guaranteed to fly twice or three times as high as the tower of St. Paul's, then burn away at that height, dispersing from its body dogs, cats, and birds, scattering fire on all sides. There was a floating stand on a pool with a Lady of the Lake and attendant nymphs to greet the Queen with a speech and song of welcome.

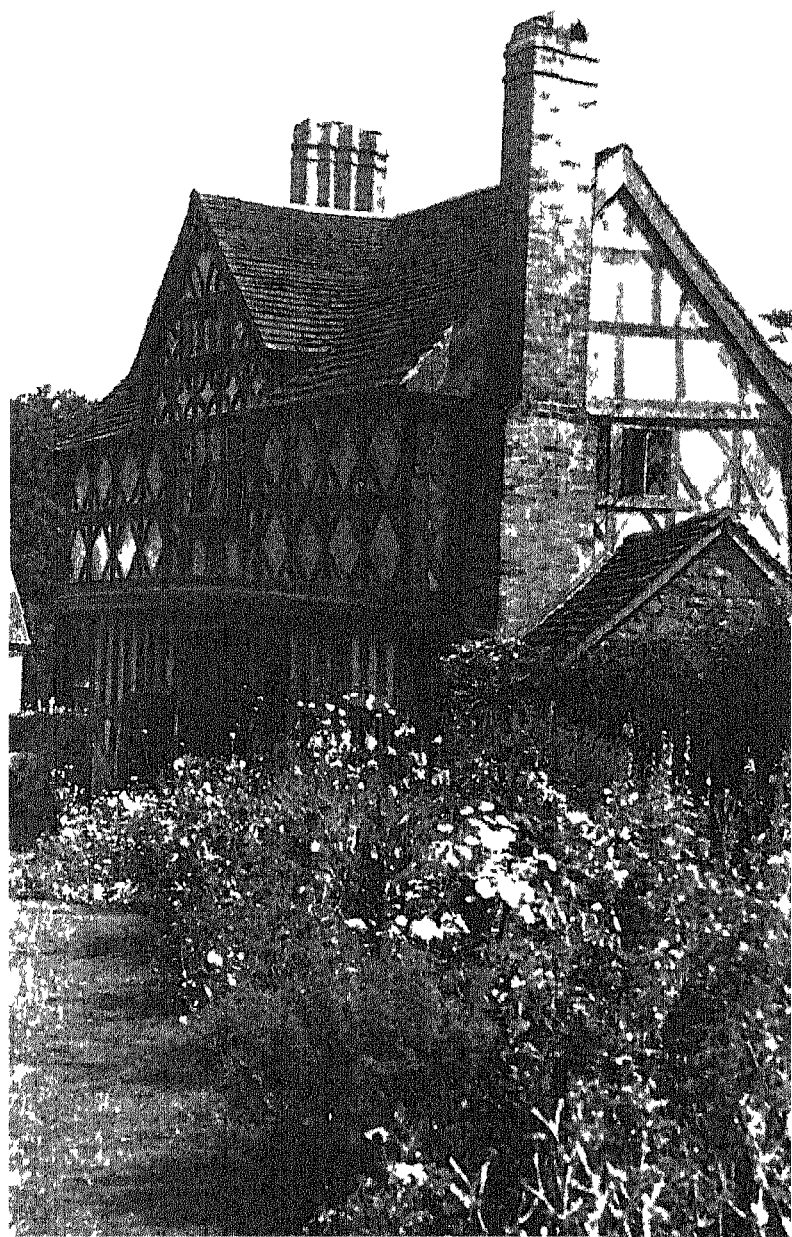
On a special bridge over which the Queen passed were posts erected at intervals with presents for her, including a cage of wildfowl, wine, fruits, armour, and musical instruments. To entertain her during her visit there were bear-baitings, Coventry Players acting *Hocks-Tuesday*, a play about the defeat of the Danes under Ethelred, which so gratified Elizabeth that she gave the actors a brace of bucks.

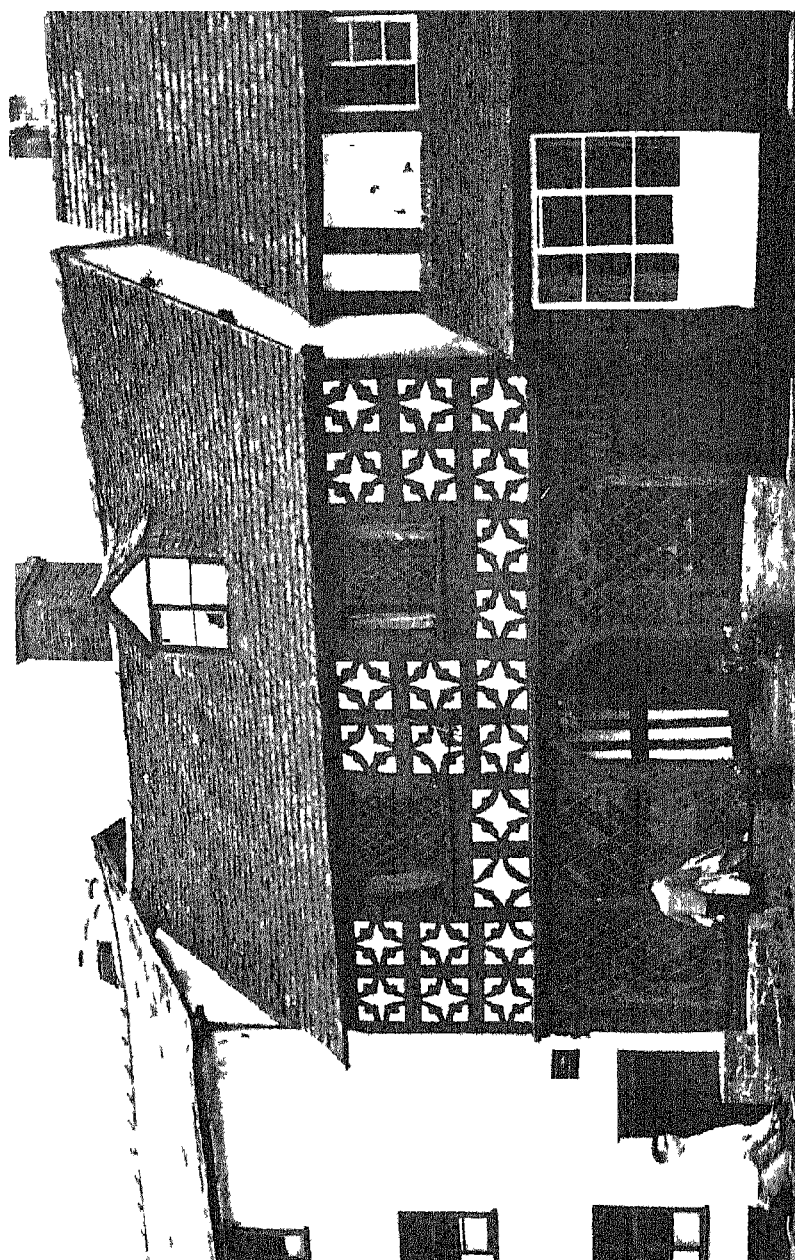
There was Morris dancing, a Triton riding on an eighteen-foot-long mermaid, Orion on a dolphin, a savage man chased by satyrs, a running at the Quintain (the forerunner of the lemon-cutting at gymkhanas), and a good deal of drinking. Three hundred and twenty hogshead of beer were drunk during these carousals.

That was the climax of Kenilworth's history. Amy Robsart had been murdered or died at Cumnor fifteen years before. Two years previously Dudley had married his second wife, Lady Sheffield, but without Elizabeth's leave or knowledge, so what he did with her while he was entertaining his Queen we don't know.

Three years after these festivities he married Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex ; and in 1588 he died, poisoned according to the general belief at Cornbury.

Kenilworth came into his brother's hands for two years, and then his son by Lady Sheffield, never acknowledged as





legitimate, laid claim to it, but having deserted his saintly wife, Alice Leigh, he took a mistress, became a Duke of the Holy Roman Empire and died in 1649, unlamented, having sold his rights (if any) to Kenilworth to James I's son Henry. Charles paid for it again to his widow. And that was the end. After the Civil War it was destroyed.

Charles II gave the ruins to Hyde, the father of Clarendon, and it has remained Clarendon property till this day, when it is now the property of the people of Kenilworth.

As Coventry lies only five miles further on from Kenilworth it would be absurd to go home without seeing that most interesting city. Most people think of it only in terms of bicycles and Lady Godiva, but there is much more in it than one modern industry and one ancient legend.

It is surrounded by villages of extraordinary beauty, and it is looked down upon by three amazing church spires, one of which is more slender than, and as symmetrically exquisite as, the cathedral spire of Salisbury.

St. Mary's Hall, with its diamond-paned windows, timbered walls and fine arches, has witnessed a succession of events for six hundred years that gives you the whole history of England in little.

Here the famous Guilds of Coventry acted their pageants and mystery plays before Henry VI. It was quick to change its loyalties to Kings, but to music it has always been constant. Kings came and went ; Richard III before and Henry VII after Bosworth Field, for instance ; but it retained its delight in pageantry until Henry VIII destroyed its great religious house, its Guilds dissolved and reduced its inhabitants from 15,000 to 3000. Protestants were burnt in 1556. Queen Elizabeth stayed here as guest and Mary Queen of Scots in St. Mary's Hall, as prisoner. Not unnaturally

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anti-Roman, it also became anti-Royalist and refused entrance to Charles I before the Civil War began, for which act its walls were levelled.

There is a magnificent example of black-and-white building in Ford's Hospital, built in 1529. Here is exquisitely carved woodwork. It is the home of seventeen old women. But the crowning glory of Coventry is the hall of the Guilds of the Holy Trinity and Our Lady, known as St. Mary's Hall, with its fine north window of nine lights, very richly decorated masonry, the courtyard in which the players enter, the fourteenth-century kitchen, the muniment room, with Elizabeth's letter relating to the safe keeping of Mary Queen of Scots, the ribbed ceiling and stone fireplace of the Mayoress's Parlour, the Mayor's seat with the emblems of the Elephant and Castle, the arms of the city and the Great Hall itself, with portraits, armour, glorious dark oak roofs, fifteenth-century glass in the great north window, and the sixteenth-century tapestry.

Then comes the three-hundred-feet tower of St. Michael's church springing straight from the ground. The four flying buttresses that attach the second tower from which the spire springs to the four pinnacles and the corners of the great tower combine to form one of the most splendid settings for a spire in the land. Its interior is a grand example of perpendicular grace and lightness, reminding us of those other thank-offerings of merchant princes in the Cotswolds at Chipping Campden and North Leach. Among a lot of interesting monuments, the most beautifully sculptured is that of Julian Nethermyl, who died in 1539. The interior of Trinity church is even more lovely, and here you will see a monument to Philemon Holland, the translator.

The overhanging houses of the Butchery, the effigy of Peeping Tom, the sixteenth-century Bablake Hospital, the

fourteenth-century church of St. John the Baptist, the Charterhouse and the richly carved and gabled buildings in Palace Yard, and the mediaeval streets, combine to make Coventry at least as interesting as Chester, if not Oxford.

The most famous place in the neighbourhood of Leamington is not, however, Warwick, Kenilworth or Coventry, inexhaustibly interesting as they all are, but Stratford-upon Avon. But to appreciate Shakespeare's birthplace you must stay in it, not visit it from a spa.

(viii)

*Matlock*

It has been the fashion to be rude about Matlock, and indeed it has deserved many of the strictures levelled against it. Too many hoardings spoil a view that would be lovely, whereas there are no hoardings large enough to blot out the outbreak of scarlet, feverish-looking bungalows that ruin its north entrance.

It has almost been quarried away on the north-western side of Matlock station to the great benefit of the English roads and the quarry-owners, but to the great embarrassment of Masson Heights, a glorious wild bit of hill rising to a height of over a thousand feet and culminating in a belt of thin trees that are as much a landmark to Derbyshire as the clump of trees on May Hill summit is to the Severn Valley and Chanctonbury Ring is to Sussex.

An equally noticeable landmark that is not natural stands on the top of Riber Hill, and this is the castle built by the inventor of Chili Paste, Mr. John Smedley, a lover of fresh air and a great believer in the curative properties of water.

Opposite this extraordinary, bleak, dark battlemented

oddity rises his great hydropathic establishment on Matlock Bank, now run on ordinary hotel lines, but originally intended to produce cures by rigid adherence to the Smedley code, discipline in the matter of meal-taking and bed-going being rigorously maintained.

John Smedley was one of many mill-owners in this district, his particular occupation being the making of stockings. He was also, as were a great number of Derbyshire worthies, an ardent Primitive Methodist, and spent much time preaching to his employees. But he also provided them with a free hospital to try out his hydropathic cures.

Matlock is as confusing as Malvern in its divisions, but as you come in from the north your eye will alight first on this steep Matlock Bank occupied mainly by the giant hydropathic establishment and its satellites and leading by a street of one in three, down which a cable tram used to run, to Matlock Bridge or Matlock, the home of the offensive hoardings. Through the heart of it runs the Derwent. There are pleasure-gardens, a cricket ground, a main shopping-street, and a church set high on a limestone rock. If you are in a train you see nothing but quarries, for tunnels hide the best of the scene.

But on the road from Matlock to Matlock Bath you pass through Matlock Dale, above which rises a magnificent white rock known as the High Tor, rising six hundred feet above the winding river with thick trees at its base, which only accentuate the shining whiteness of the bare rock that ultimately emerges.

It must have been this gem of a rock that inspired Ruskin to say :

Derbyshire is a lovely child's alphabet : an alluring first lesson in all that is admirable : on its miniature cliffs a dark ivy leaf detaches itself as an object of importance : you distinguish with

interest the species of mosses on the top . . . the grace of it all . . . and the sudden news of its enchanted changes, the terrorless grotesque. It was a meadow a minute ago, now it is a cliff, and in an instant a cave—and here was a brooklet, and now it is a whisper underground. Turn but the corner of the path, and it is a little green lake of incredible crystal ; and if the trout in it lifted up their heads and talked to you, you would be no more surprised than if it was in the *Arabian Nights*.

And I can well believe that it was like that in Ruskin's day.

But I resent paying money to cross bridges and climb the High Tor, I resent the presence of shacks of ginger-beer and postcards, shops of Blue John hour-glasses and photograph frames, and petrified birds' nests.

Matlock Bath that follows the Dale is full of these things. But it shows how insidious this business of attacking vulgarity is. As a small boy I was enchanted by the specimens of petrified birds' nests stuck outside the caverns and by the Blue John spar in the jewellers' shops.

I lived for those afternoons when the band played in the gardens above the river and the grand Saturday night of the Annual Fête when the rock walks were festooned with Chinese lanterns and there was a procession of boats and trainloads of excursionists used to come from Leicester and Nottingham.

But there is no getting away from the fact that Matlock Bath wears a jaded look, as if it had given up the struggle to make people drink its waters. It is a pity, because there is still any amount of unspoilt natural beauty in this narrow ravine and industrial history has been made in this little valley.

It was here that George Newnes, the publisher, began life. His father was minister of the famous chapel founded by the religious fanatic, Lady Glenorchy, in the

grounds of the famous Richard Arkwright, whose mills still stand.

It is something of a surprise to find that the first waters were discovered in Matlock Bath in 1698. In 1735 a new bath was discovered and Defoe remarked that its water was just milk-warm. It remained unknown, primitive, and very cheap (a bedroom for a week cost five shillings) until the new coach road was made to Derby through Belper instead of over the hills through Wirksworth in 1815. The distractions, beyond that of drinking the waters, extended to billiards, a circulating library, and some spar and petrification shops.

Matlock has never been gay in the Mediterranean sense. But just about a hundred years ago prices rose. The cost of a bath rose from sixpence to a shilling. The Royal Mail coach from London to Manchester arrived at 10.30 each day, changed horses, and started off again at 10.45. A little later the Peveril of the Peak and the Bruce would arrive bound for the same destination. In the afternoons the Nelson, from Nottingham to Manchester, and the Dart, from Birmingham to Buxton, would, together with the same number of southward-bound coaches, help to pass the time for the water-drinkers.

There were private carriages and a fashionable parade. It was described at this time as "having gaiety without dissipation, activity without noise. It is tranquil without dullness, elegant with pomp, and splendid without extravagance. In it the man of fashion may at all times find amusement: the man of rank may find society by which he will not be disgraced, and the philosopher a source of infinite satisfaction".

A model community in a dale that drove one visitor to write: "Every object is sublime and wonderful. Enthusiastic ideas take possession of us." Nathaniel Hawthorne said

he had never seen "such exquisite scenery as surrounds this village of Matlock". And the wise man will pause before disagreeing with an observer so shrewd and of such wide experience.

And even here, in these assembly rooms, there are ghosts. Particularly is there the shade of Lord Byron sitting out moodily watching Mary Chaworth dancing with other men. Not many women resisted Byron, but Mary Chaworth, despite or perhaps because of the efforts of her guardian, Lord Eldon, who favoured Byron's suit, would have nothing to do with him.

To make matters worse John Musters, the "King of gentlemen huntsmen", a country squire of Nottinghamshire, caring nothing for the threats of Lord Eldon, always turned up where Mary was, and eventually married her. She died in 1832 from a chill caught in her flight from Colwick during the Reform Act riots, and is remembered mainly from Byron's verses about her.

Ruskin was first taken to Matlock in 1829, when he was a boy of ten, and immediately fell a victim to the fascination of the caverns. "My father even went with me into the terrible Speedwell mine at Castleton, where, for once, I was a little frightened myself."

John Wesley also visited Matlock, not to collect felspar or to admire the rocks, but to preach the gospel.

As I have known Matlock longer and more intimately than any other place in the kingdom, because it has for so long been my home, I find it harder to see with an unbiassed eye. I think that it gets more than its share of grey skies. I think that it has allowed, in the past, a wholesale disfigurement of its loveliness from which the recovery is slower than it need be. I think it still lacks a comprehensive scheme to put it on its feet again.

On the other hand, I believe that it has something to offer that no other spa has. In addition to its own beauties it stands on the threshold of some of the most interesting scenery in England. There are the ruins of Wingfield Manor, where Bess of Hardwick looked after Mary Queen of Scots ; there is Dethick, the birthplace of Anthony Babington, who died for that unhappy Queen ; there is the Via Gellia, with its hundreds of unexplored caverns among lead-mines that the Romans worked ; there are Wirksworth and Ashbourne, with their memories of George Eliot ; there's Ashover, leading on to the lone grouse moors above Chatsworth, there's Haddon Hall and a dozen lovely limestone dales.

This is a grand walking-country and in some of the outlying villages that have no international fame you will meet people who are, perhaps, better worth knowing than any others you will ever meet. And, to be prepared for some of the surprises that await you, take a copy of *Sons and Lovers*.

At a recent lecture that I gave in Matlock a member of the audience asked me who, in all my travels, I had found to be the people readiest to laugh.

Outside the United States, where they laugh as quickly as they kill, the palm goes easily to Derbyshire. Rochdale has produced Gracie Fields, but Matlock does the laughing at her. So let this put a stop for all time to the legend about our being "strong i' th' arm and thick i' th' yed".

We are strong in the arm, though we are more likely to be strong in the leg through climbing Matlock Bank, Riber, Masson, and Tansley, after the carnival, or a busy Saturday night. But we are not thick in the head or we shouldn't be able to laugh so easily. For laughter springs as much from the head as from the heart. You've got to be able to understand as well as to feel before you can laugh properly.

Wherever I travel people always say to me : "Why are you always so cheerful ? Why are you always laughing ?"

And my answer is : "If you'd been brought up where I was, you'd see the funny side of life."

We are always taught to regard Frenchmen as gay, southerners as smiling, Irishmen as dancing, and the Welsh as the world's greatest singers. All I can say is that I've heard far more natural singing (usually at ten o'clock at night and seldom in tune, but always spontaneous and happy) in the Derwent Valley than ever I heard in the Rhondda. I've seen ten times more gaiety in a Tansley social than ever I saw in Paris, while as for dancing, the Irish haven't got a leg to dance on compared with some of my partners on a Derbyshire green.

And do we smile ? Have you ever seen yourself at the Wakes ? Derbyshire people are about the only people I know who continually sing or whistle at their work.

Our local industries serve to pave the roads of half Europe and to keep warm and decorate the bodies of practically the whole of that part of the world that wears clothes at all.

But our capacity for cheerfulness, our mastery in the art of carnival still goes totally unrecognized. If you've ever been to those doleful Battles of Flowers on the Riviera you'll know what I mean. Forced gaiety makes for the most miserable of fiascos.

Our gaiety in Derbyshire is of the spirit, inbred. It comes out in all weathers. We laugh more readily in bad weather. The only time I've ever seen a Derbyshire crowd even a little peevish was on the most perfect day I can remember. The reason was obvious. We like to make our own perfection, not to find it ready-made for us. We laugh most readily in the utmost discomfort, when we're packed tighter than a seam of lead in a train coming home after



fifteen hours' consecutive rain at Blackpool. That's our idea of fun.

My most gleeful memories are those of coming out for a duck Saturday after Saturday on all the Derbyshire cricket grounds. Did I laugh? I'll say I did, and so did all the rest of the Matlock team. Did I miss an open goal for Tansley against Youlgrave? Am I likely to forget it? I've hardly stopped laughing yet. Did I fall through the ice into Lumsdale dam? Did I miss the target altogether with my last all-important shot on the Ashover rifle-range? Did I get lost for a day and a night in the Via Gellia lead-mines? Did I fall into Scholes's dam on my way home on a dark night with the temperature below freezing? Did I forget the words halfway through the last song I ever sang at a Tansley concert? Has my life been one long laugh of happiness?

It certainly *has*, and the reason that it has is due to the fact that my home, from the time that I was five years old, was in Derbyshire and that I learnt there the most valuable lesson in life, that good honest laughter, which hurts nobody, is the best tonic against all ills, and the best philosophy of living.

(ix)

*Buxton*

Most people elect to see Derbyshire from Buxton, and certainly Buxton is to be congratulated on knowing how to make the best of its natural advantages. It is nearer the actual Peak (which is, of course, not a peak but a boggy plateau strictly preserved for grouse) than Matlock, and it is distinctly gayer and better planned.

Just as Bexhill owes much to the fact that Earl de la Warr owns it, so does Buxton wear, and proudly, the imprint of the Duke of Devonshire. This has given it an architecture faintly reminiscent of Bath, with whom it shares one other feature. The Romans knew and appreciated its warm springs. But it is not at all likely that they used Buxton as a health resort as they used Bath.

Those who were on duty guarding the lines of communications and those who were in charge of the lead-mines would take advantage of them, but no Roman ever went to Buxton for fun as we do.

In Henry VIII's reign we hear of the St. Ann's Well being closed to those who sought cures there, but in Elizabeth's reign it was reopened and a house was built for the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, who brought Mary Queen of Scots here for five weeks in 1573, and in at least five other years as well. Mary liked it, and Elizabeth immediately suspected a plot for her escape and sent Lord Burghley up to see if she was safely guarded. No stranger, not even a beggar, was allowed near her lodging.

Hobbes, the philosopher librarian at Chatsworth in the seventeenth century, talks about getting up in the middle of the night to bathe in the waters. He also tells us that he dined off mutton broth, loin of mutton, and chicken with buttered peas, which contrasts oddly with the story of Sir Thomas Browne's son, who complains in 1662 that the mutton tasted like dog.

The house where Mary Queen of Scots was lodged was pulled down in 1670 and the present Old Hall Hotel now stands on its site. At the end of that century there were more complaints of unreasonable charges and inadequate lodgings, and one couple of tourists described Buxton as a poor, stony little town with, however, the compensation

of good company. They met there a young lady with whom they made so merry that the desolation of the country was forgotten in "heavenly enjoyments". As the bath was only ten yards long and about half that width the twenty people who swam or walked in it at once could not afford room to be very sprightly in their merriment, but as the actual drinking of the water caused "a sort of inebriating giddiness" perhaps nobody knew or cared how wide, long or deep the bath was.

The famous Crescent was built in 1780 by the fifth Duke out of the profits from his copper-mines at Alstonefield just above Dovedale. It was, of course, modelled on Wood's famous Crescent in Bath, hence the feeling of reminiscence, but the architect was Carr, of York. The stone was quarried on the spot. At the back of the Crescent was the Ducal stables, with stalls for 110 riding horses and a large exercising-ground under cover. This is now the Hospital.

The £120,000 which the Duke laid out on the Crescent has enabled generations of succeeding visitors to conjure up at once on hearing the word "Buxton" one very pleasing architectural image to the eye. The Crescent and the dome-covered stables are as well-known as Bath's Crescent and Circus. In neither town does one think of the baths first.

Buxton had the wisdom to use the rocky rising ground in front of the Crescent as terraces and walks, where Mancunian Jews and Derbyshire-born visitors occupy different tiers.

It is not always easy to sit out on these terraces unless one is acclimatized to wind, fog, and rain. I do not think Buxton is really unfortunate in its weather. I only think that I and other visitors are unlucky in our choice of season. There are, however, occasions when I sympathize with Lord Denman's neighbour in the coach who said that "in this country there are nine months of winter and three of cold weather".

And, after all, in hilly country you expect rain. What is depressing is the continual pall of greyness. I like the grey-stone walls and the dark grey gritstone, and the light grey limestone, but I do not like this colour to be repeated in the sky.

But in the early part of the nineteenth century the fashionable bath-takers amused themselves with balls in the dome, plays in the theatre, and were edified by sermons in the assembly rooms on Sunday. Dancing, however, stopped at eleven. In the Palace Hotel, where the youth of Cheshire, Lancashire, and Derbyshire meet on Saturday nights throughout the year, it still stops at midnight.

Wagons and coaches made contact with the outer world, though midnight seems a strangely unhappy hour to leave these heights on the outside of a coach in mid-winter. It is odd to find Defoe, who had no liking for wild country (you remember his fear of the Cheviot), describing Buxton as "much more agreeable than the close city of Bath". And this word "close" is well chosen. In spite of the fact that Buxton lies in a hollow you certainly never feel shut in. It is the bleakest of the many inland spas and the awnings of glass that are put over all the shops, presumably to give the impression that you need protection from sunstroke, are, to those who dislike getting wet and being blown about by gusts of wind, one of the most pleasing features of the town. It is possible on even the wettest day to shop under cover just as you can at Southport.

It was not a scene calculated to please the eighteenth-century taste which liked its nature urbanized and elegant. The fact that the surrounding hills were surmounted not with trees but stone walls made one visitor talk about "forlorn nakedness", and one French geologist described the air as impregnated with the devil of melancholy; but we

seem to be made of sterner stuff than our forefathers. The latest guide-book describes Buxton as "a delicious town, combining the intimacy of a mountain village with the spaciousness of an eighteenth-century spa" ; and maintains that the air of Buxton is like wine, and is the driest in England.

No one who has given Buxton a fair trial could fail to corroborate that phrase about the wine. It is the most invigorating air I know. As a boy I used to run all day on foot following the High Peak Harriers and, in this hilly country, that would be impossible unless the air were a good deal stronger than the air of Bath. And in spite of its dreadful periods of rain, when it dries, it dries quickly. While so far from inducing the spirit of melancholy I have seldom seen people in higher spirits than both the natives and visitors.

Buxton people laugh easily and often. Jerome K. Jerome was inspired to write one of his funniest articles about the legions of bath-chairs racing down its steep slopes. I do not suggest that it has the sparkle and gaiety of a Swiss winter sports resort, but whenever we think of winter sports in England our thoughts revert always first to Buxton, where, in spite of a lack of sunshine and crisp, hard-crusting snow, we manage to get as much excitement out of our toboggan-runs and laughter out of our ski-running postures as if we were in Mürren.

Buxton is an extremely easy place to find your way about. The two stations, both termini, one from London, the other from Manchester, stand conveniently side by side and provide a solid and dignified entrance. Opposite, on an incline in the splendid isolation of big private grounds, stands the Palace Hotel, where you will find salads and cheeses of a very exceptional quality, an excellent cellar, and food both

rich and substantial that you will appreciate all the more after a day's riding, tramp or drive over the hills. I know no air which gives you a bigger appetite.

Beyond the Palace Hotel stands the huge dome of the Devonshire Hospital, once the stables. This has the widest span of any dome in Europe (154 feet), a fact which will be impressed upon you by all good Buxtonians. In the hollow below the Palace Hotel and Hospital stands the Crescent and Pump Room, and an open space where all the buses to Macclesfield, Manchester, and Matlock pick up their passengers.

Very attractive winter gardens with glass-roofed hall, where the band plays, an opera garden, avenues, duck pond, and tennis courts face the Old Hall and Royal Spa Hotels. Then come the dignified greystone houses of the residents of whom, in recent years, Vera Brittain is probably the best known by reason of her book *Testament of Youth*, an autobiography of a war-time nurse, which sheds a vivid light on Buxton society.

But Buxton's fame rests mainly on its scenery, and Buxton's modern worthies have played a magnificent part in seeing that this scenery is preserved for all time. Mr. A. J. Holmes and Mr. E. Hodgson Kerfoot, two of Buxton's best-known citizens, have given extensive tracts of land to the nation and stirred a similar generosity in others by their example so that Derbyshire now ranks highest in its gifts to the National Trust. This, of course, makes an immense difference to Buxton visitors. It means, for instance, that all Dovedale is open and free for all time, and that this great gift is appreciated is proved by the fact that in spite of the hundreds of thousands of sightseers who walk down this green gem of a dale (no cars can get there, thank goodness), no litter is ever left by the riverside or ever seen through the

whole length and breadth of the valley. There is also National Trust property on the wide and extensive moors above Sheffield (a grand drive from Buxton), at Stanton Moor Edge, and Shining Cliff above the Derwent.

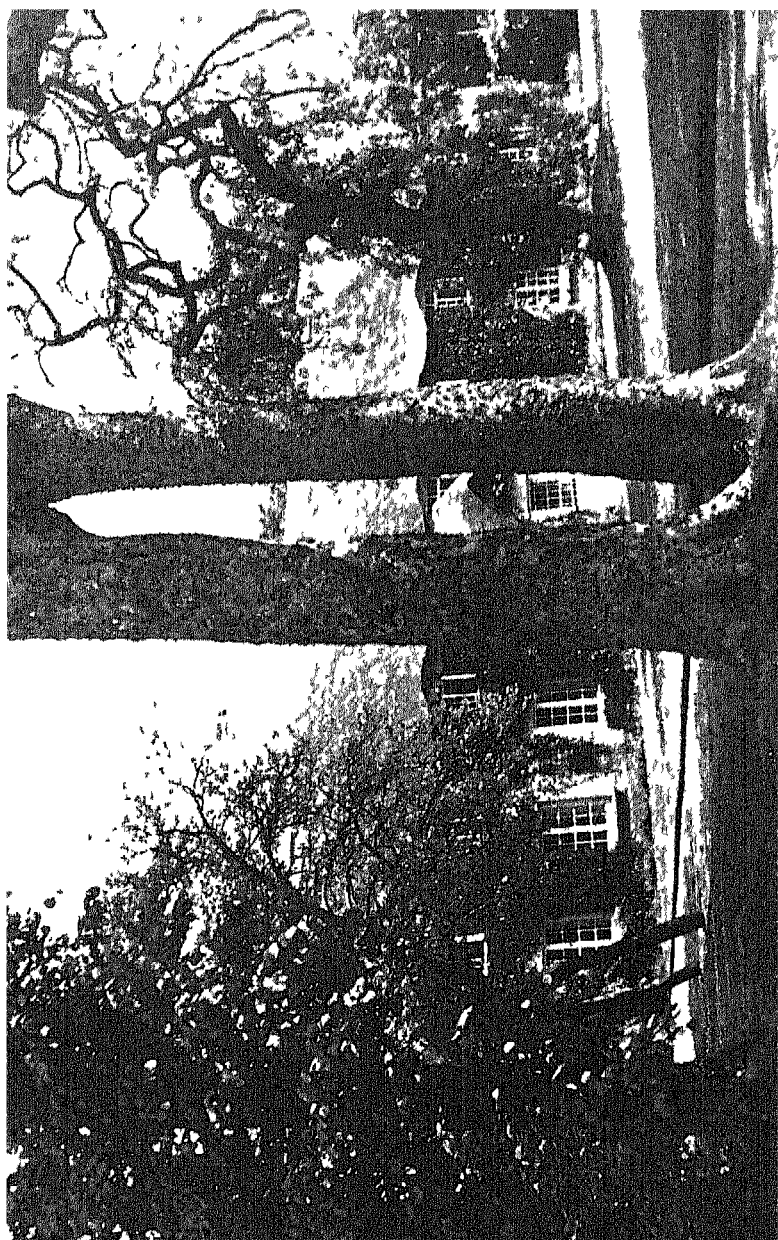
It is easy from Buxton to reach an astonishing diversity of scenery. If you walk up the winding moorland road to the "Cat and Fiddle" Inn, which stands nearly 1700 feet above sea-level, you will look down westward over another winding moorland road which leads down into the soft, tree-covered, green plain of Cheshire, with its superb black-and-white, half-timbered houses, notably Morton Old Hall and the rectory at Gawsorth.

If you climb up to Axe Edge you stand at the source of five of the most astonishingly beautiful small rivers in England—the Dane, Goyt, Manifold, Wye, and Dove—and to wander down any, or all, of these from their sources is to fall under the spell of little hills, the existence of which very few people ever guess.

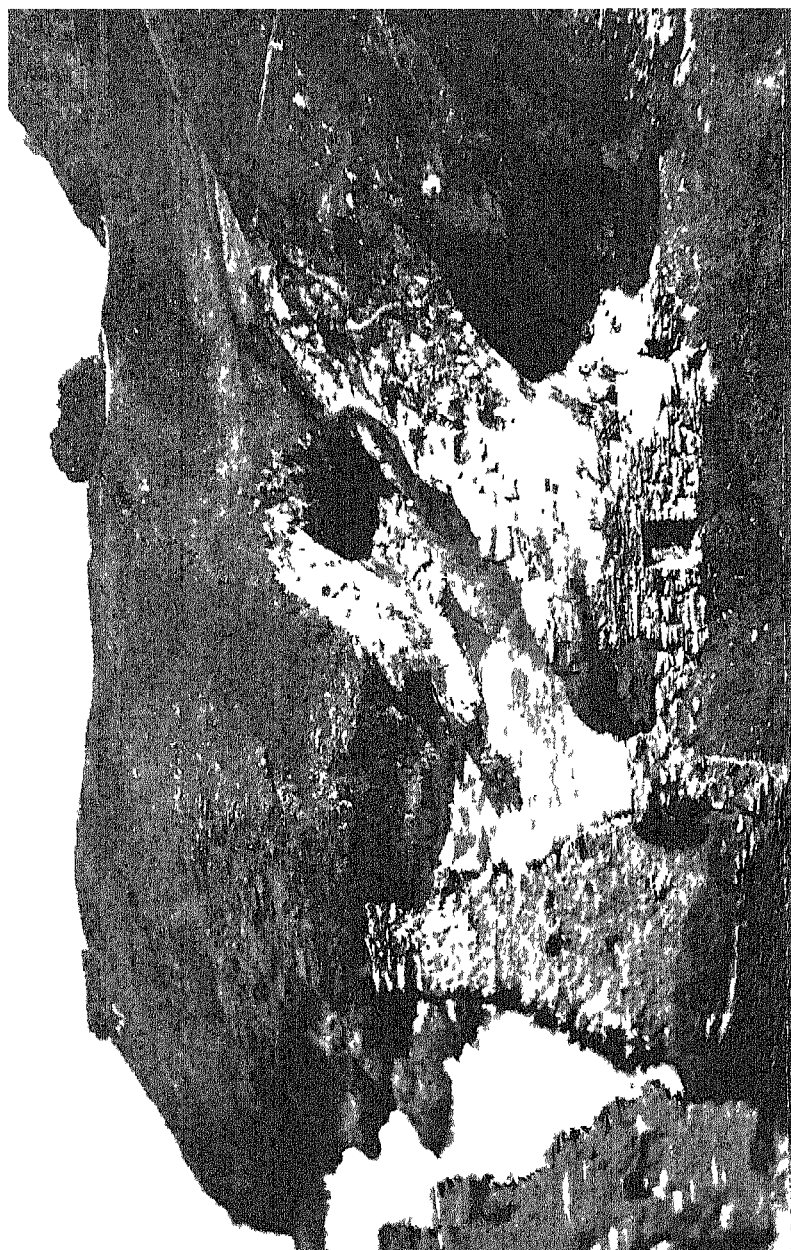
I have never counted the dales that can be reached on foot from Buxton, but there must be scores, and if you want a dale to yourself in no whit inferior to the dales that everybody visits, try walking down from Monyash through Lathkil Dale to Bradford Dale.

You will be surprised at the amount of rich foliage there is about on the banks of the lower reaches, as you will be surprised at the symmetry of architecture in the villages that stand on the upper banks.

Monyash and Youlgrave can hold their own for beauty against any village of the Cotswolds. For wild scenery you will go north-east to the Peak itself, to the high, barren, grouse-invested moors of Kinderscout, across one shoulder of which the public have been allowed by the grace of the grouse-preservers to walk so long as they kept to the narrow







but well-defined path. This is not a walk to be recommended to everybody.

Dovedale is shut in and you feel free as air because, through the generosity of the few, it has become the property of every man. Kinderscout is open and you feel cabined and irritable because, through the lack of generosity of the few, access, except on a narrow strip, has been too long denied to everybody. The sooner Kinderscout becomes a national park the better for the health of the industrial worker who likes nothing better on holiday than to tramp over trackless moors, away from the noise of machines and the presence of too many of his fellows.

What else is there near Buxton? Arborlow, the Stonehenge of the north; Tissington, where there is a lovely old manor house (Derbyshire is full of stone Tudor manor-houses), and they deck the walls with flowers on Ascension Day; Ashbourne, where there is an exquisite monument in the church to a small girl, Eyam, with its memories of the villagers' heroism during the plague; caverns at Buxton and Castleton, with great masses of stalactites and stalagmites; Chatsworth and Haddon Hall; Ilam Hall and Alton Towers; the great church at Tideswell; and the lead-mining villages of Winster and Wirksworth.

And almost the finest part of a holiday in Buxton is the sense of exhilaration you get, driving or walking along any road or track out of the town in the morning and back to the town at night.

There is a savagery about Axe Edge on a winter's day [says the admirable *Observer* correspondent who contributes "Car and Country" notes each week], indeed about the whole road from Leek to Buxton, that makes an indelible impression on your memory. There is something in the gaunt architecture of those wintry hills that knocks at your heart as nothing does in other

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moorlands. I have driven up Axe Edge and Bareleg in glittering August weather, but, though the sun beat down fiercely on the dry ridge, it could not thaw that bleak look or touch the grim indifference of the hill.

“Savagery” is the right word. On the heights you get a noble savagery. In the tree-covered valleys and dales you get a gracious gentle series of sinuous curves.

The quick contrast between the two helps to make up the charm that is peculiarly the charm of Derbyshire.

## THE HOLIDAY CAMP

I HAVE JUST COME BACK FROM A HOLIDAY CAMP. IN THE old days we used to set off with our camps on our backs, like snails, and pitch our tents each night by the side of some stream, lake, or sea-shore which gave promise of good bathing in the morning and, if it were very hot, under the moon.

We enjoyed this sort of camping for several good reasons. It meant as complete a change as possible from our ordinary work-a-day life. It was fun to have no roof over our heads, to watch the stars, to listen to the night noises of animals, to wake up at dawn.

It was also fun to be roughing it, to see how far we could be independent of help in the matter of making beds, preparing meals, washing up and generally looking after ourselves.

Most of all was it fun to be right off the beaten track, away from the sound of traffic and the hum of human voices.

But this sort of holiday was not everybody's idea of fun.

It was admirable for boys and girls in small groups, for young men and young girls to like a holiday alone or with one companion, but there were many who found in it no solution to the problem of their holidays.

It did not commend itself to the elderly, who wanted comfort; to the gregarious, who wanted to be with the herd; or to the great majority of women, whose one idea on holiday

was to be relieved of the drudgery of housework. There is little fun in cooking, making beds and washing up if you have been doing little else the whole of the rest of the year.

So there has lately sprung into being a quite new and entirely different sort of holiday camp.

The one I have just been visiting is among the sand-dunes of Skegness, on the east coast of England, where the climate is unusually dry and the air is unusually bracing.

I had expected to see a serried array of tents, rather like a military camp. What I saw was much more like a Continental lido. Instead of tents there were rows and rows of dainty little chalets, literally summer-houses, each with two windows and a rose garden and a lawn in front of it. Each of the chalets had electric light, and hot and cold water laid on in the basins, which is not of course remarkable in a house, but is an important indication of the tendency towards what one might call luxury in a camp.

There were terrace chalets with one single bed or one double bed. There were separate chalets with two single beds or one double and one single bed ; and there were family chalets with one double and two single beds, or one double bed and a child's cot.

As I passed down the terrace there were couples dozing in armchairs outside their chalet doors, half watching the more vigorous playing clock-golf on the flower-fringed lawn in front.

Most of the girls were in shorts or play-suits or beach pyjamas ; most of the men were in flannels—short or long—blazers and cricket shirts.

Everybody was looking very merry, very brown and very active.

At the far end of the chalets stood the sand-dunes, where

I saw some of the camp riding and another group off on an organized ramble.

The less strenuous were just sun-bathing in the sand-dunes between energetic bouts of bathing from the sands.

But the greatest crowds were collected in front of a long one-storeyed flat-roofed sun-trap with glass windows which faced on to a sparkling fountain and an ultra-modern open-air swimming-pool. Here one section lay and sun-bathed on the broad sun-bathing decks while the swimmers and divers disported themselves in the clear blue cooling waters of the pool.

A class of about fifty trim-looking young men and girls were taking part in a keep-fit class, while further away the older men were playing bowls in panama hats and the youngsters were dashing up and down some fifty or sixty hard tennis courts.

Over the glass windows of the great dining-hall was written in enormous letters the camp motto :

“OUR TRUE INTENT IS ALL FOR YOUR DELIGHT.”

And at luncheon-time I saw how adequately that motto was being carried out.

Each of the five thousand visitors has his or her own seat at a small reserved table, so that there is no indiscriminate scrambling for seats. As the air is so invigorating, everybody came in bursting with high spirits and a good appetite.

They manage with no difficulty at all to enjoy four hearty meals a day.

In the early afternoon the matrons take a siesta, the young children make room for tea by rushing up and down

the beach or playing games under the camp nurse in the playground ; couples go for strolls over the sand-dunes, and all too quickly the day flits past to sundown.

Then groups repair to their favourite haunts. I saw a very good imitation of an old-fashioned English country inn called the "Pig and Whistle", with oak beams, oak benches and oak tables. There was an equally impressive imitation of a Tyrolean beer-garden with water-wheel and alcoves and balconies festooned with flowers, where the lager-drinkers gathered.

There was a macabre place called the "Dungeon", where others were enjoying their prandial drinks under a raised portcullis with heavy iron and oak doors, and skeletons grinning from behind iron bars above.

The most sophisticated of the youngsters sat perched high on chromium seats in the American cocktail bar drinking gin fizzes and mint julceps and the sorts of drink that I usually associate with a Transatlantic voyage or a cruise. Indeed, being in this holiday camp was very like being on a cruise, with the advantage that there was no chance of becoming seasick.

There were dances every night after dinner, in addition to concerts at which there was both community singing and special entertainment provided by artists of international reputation. The merry-making went on to a late hour. They meant obviously to make the most of every hour of their all too short holiday.

A fortnight in the year is all that most of them get, and few of them could even have afforded to take it in this luxurious way were it not for the new rule that workers should still remain in receipt of full pay while on holiday.

The charge for this camp is an inclusive one.

Visitors pay two and a half guineas a week each up till the

height of the season, when the price is advanced to three and a half guineas, but there are no extras whatever.

Bathing is free, tennis is free, dancing is free, all meals are included, and all service.

Young people like these camps because it means that they make new friends, they get a large choice of partners in the dance and on the tennis court, and there is never any lack of variety in exercise.

The shy and diffident find them invaluable, for though there is no regimenting or dragooning of guests into taking part in games, there is every opportunity for everyone to meet everybody else in the most genuine and good-humoured surroundings.

It is pretty hard to stay in a camp and not to become part and parcel of it.

But those who benefit most from the camp are the mothers of families. At last they are relieved from the cares of office. For a fortnight they never have to think out a single meal ahead, they don't have to cook, to make the beds, to lay the table, or to have to wash up. What is even more of a relief, they no longer have to worry whether the children are running into mischief or danger, for the camp nurse takes them all under her own wing and organizes games for them and superintends their swings and slides and roundabouts.

This gives mothers the chance to play tennis, golf, or bathe with their husbands ; or if they have failed to acquire skill in games, they can have the free services of the tennis coach, the swimming instructor or the golf professional. Or it gives them the opportunity to go off to the camp High Street and have their hair waved, or turn over the attractive play-suits displayed in the camp shops.

This is perhaps the crowning factor of this new luxury



camp life. They are as completely self-contained as any mammoth ocean-going liner. You can get a complete fortnight's holiday without ever leaving the precincts of the camp.

If it is wet there are billiard rooms and table tennis and card rooms, music rooms, reading rooms and ballrooms for those who like being with the others, or the seclusion of the chalet for those who want privacy.

A week of rain in a tent is enough to make anybody forswear camping in a tent for the rest of his life. But a week's rain in a luxury holiday camp would hardly be noticeable most of the time, as there are so many indoor activities. And in any case, a week of rain is almost unheard of on the East Coast.

In fine weather, for the gregarious and the not too rich, it would be hard to find a better holiday. The miners from the north mingle with the typists and clerks from the south and the farmers and shop-keepers of the midlands and west on absolutely level terms, and it is very good for all of them.

The difference between these holiday camps and the lidos lies in the fact that in the fashionable lidos nobody knows anybody else and everybody tries to outlive everybody else in the number, variety and design of their very expensive frocks, while in the holiday camp everybody knows everybody else and there is more undressing than dressing.

Those who have to dress in more or less sombre uniforms through the year naturally want on holiday to feel free to walk about without stiff collar and black tie, without stockings and without hat, in as little clothing as the height of the thermometer permits.

Where all are earning more or less the same wage that allows of very little margin for holidays at all there is little

temptation to assume superiority over neighbouring holiday-makers. In these camps everyone helps his neighbours to make his holidays merrier and more memorable, and the organizers are to be congratulated on their solution of how to make holidays enjoyable for those with little money.

It is not surprising to find more and more extensions of the idea all round the coast wherever there is a suitable lovely site of open beaches and lovely sand-dunes.

The popular resorts will continue to attract those who can afford them, but the camps turn themselves into a popular resort where everybody knows before he starts exactly how much the whole of his holiday will cost him.

## NORTHERN PILGRIMAGE

IN NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD IS THE INFLUENCE OF environment on character more pronounced than in England, where the outlook and temperament of the northerner is as different from the outlook and temperament of the southerner as the scenery of the north is different from that of the south. The northern scene is rugged, wild, and in places majestic ; whereas the southern scene is gentle, urbane and smooth.

In the far north-east of England is a small compact combination of about a dozen deep inland lakes and rocky crags rising in some instances to three thousand feet connected by richly wooded and watered glens that have been the favourite holiday ground for the climber and walker for the last hundred years. The whole of this minute gem lies within a circle of fifteen miles radius.

This wild country was, a century ago, the source of inspiration of a group of most remarkable young writers known as the Romantic Revivalists. Their leader was William Wordsworth, a native of this district, who derived from his early contacts with nature a clear vision that deepened in maturer years into a philosophy of deep significance.

When he was young he tells us :

The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms were then to me  
An appetite : a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, not any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.

Later this purely sensual reaction to Nature altered.

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air . . .  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

Poetry, in Wordsworth's phrase, springs from thoughts recollected in tranquillity, and he clothed these thoughts in the simplest possible words.

His nearest friend, Coleridge, was affected in a wholly different way. His gift was that of evoking mystery by the splendour and freshness of his rich imagination. All his work is charged with the magic of the supernatural. Both poets were deeply affected by the beauty of the countryside, and gave an impetus by their genius in totally different directions to the generation of poets who succeeded them.

They helped, not only to revolutionize poetic diction by simplifying it, but also to remind men of the high spiritual exaltation that descends on those who develop a "wise passiveness" in their relations with natural beauty.

The fells and dales of Cumberland and Westmorland still possess this power to make the beholder believe that

"Nature never did betray the heart that loved her", even when the beholder is unable to put into words the effect that this blend of blue water, green trees, and grey rocks has upon his mind, and the little stone bridges over the tumbling becks, the long winding tracks over the high slopes of Blencathra and Helvellyn, the wooded islets in mid-lake, and the bare rocky pinnacles of Great Gable provide a treasure-house of pictures for the mind to retain long years after we visit and scale them.

A few miles north of the Lake District runs the unfrequented undulating purple moorland that separates England from Scotland, the scene of private family feuds on either side the Border for centuries. There are stout mediaeval castles studded about on the hillsides and on the banks of all the rivers of this Border country. Every farmhouse hereabouts still retains its grim pele tower; a stone fortification where the family could go for protection when the bands of cattle-stealers made a foray over the debatable land.

These forays gave rise to a long sequence of ballads; haunting unsophisticated melodies tell of "old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago".

These were not the work of any one known poet, but polished by centuries of usage and handed down by word of mouth until they were collected and edited in the eighteenth century by Bishop Percy.

The great leader on the English side was Percy, and on the Scots side Douglas, and the great battle between the Percy and the Douglas is commemorated in "Chevy Chase" and "The Battle of Otterburn". These simple rhymes stir the heart as with a trumpet and exactly suit the wild hills where they had their origin.

Not all are about battles. The most haunting concern

fairy lovers, King Arthur, and Robin Hood. Much of their magic comes from the Border idiom in which they are couched, as in :

Janet has kilted her green kirtle  
A little abune the knee :  
And she has snooded her yellow hair  
A little abune her bree,  
And she is on to Miles Cross  
As fast as she can hie.

The ballad world is one of warlocks and witches, where men are changed by the fairies into snakes and stags and hot irons, and lovers are murdered in their beds while their ghosts thereafter continue to call on each other. Whole tragic dramas are unfolded in ten short stanzas with a swiftness and inevitability of phrase that would be the despair of any modern playwright.

Immediately south of these Borderland moors runs the famous Roman Wall built by the Emperor Hadrian eighteen hundred years ago in a straight line for seventy-three miles from coast to coast. Just north of the Border lies the river Tweed and Abbotsford, where Sir Walter Scott was inspired by these same ballads to write that long succession of Waverley novels to remind his fellow countrymen of Scotland's long, honourable, and romantic history.

In the cities of the south you may be sceptical about the little folk, the elves, and goblins, but not on these lonely heights, alone, in the depths of winter. Then you, too, may perhaps hear the fairy bridles ring on hallowe'en when the fairy folk do ride.

And if you are not haunted by the fairy folk you will undoubtedly be haunted by the magic refrain of the old ballads whose beauty is like that of mediaeval stained glass and as little capable of being imitated. And here again you can

easily see how the long chain of rolling hills and deep valleys inspired the poetry and the imagination of the early ballad-mongers.

Down the spine of this north country runs a range of carboniferous limestone hills known as the Pennine Range which merges into the millstone grit on some extremely bleak moors that stand above the heavily industrialized dales of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The wet, boggy tops are the haunt of grouse and a few grim, arid farms, while the valleys are black with the smoke from a hundred mills and hundreds of thousands of cottage chimneys. This is a country of no hedges but there are miles and miles of stone walls that are as black as the fleece of the sheep who are penned up in the small fields.

This is the Brontë country, the home of those strange sisters who startled the Victorian world by the stark passion of their novels and poems. Haworth parsonage has become a shrine for lovers of literature the world over. It stands black, stark, and grim; a stone house above the flat tombstones of a grey churchyard on a hilltop above the industrial Aire Valley and just below the lonely grouse moors.

To Charlotte Brontë, whose heart lay in Belgium, these moors were unfriendly. To Emily, her sister, they were the fountain of her inspiration, her very life-blood, and it is rather for the sake of *Wuthering Heights*, written by a spiritual Titan, than for *Jane Eyre*, the tortured expression of a frustrated body, that one makes this pilgrimage.

In the summer Haworth Moor smiles benignly enough; but the most fitting time to visit it is in the depths of winter, in a blizzard, when the wind is moaning round the eaves of the farmhouses and the snow that is swirling round and round cuts off the farmers for days from all other earthly contacts. That is how Emily knew it. It was then that she

met and communed with her twin spirit selves, Heathcliff and Catherine.

One of the most pleasing features of this northern pilgrimage is the sense of stable continuity that you will everywhere feel.

In the Lake District you will still meet the tall, lean, sober, athletic, philosophic fellsmen speaking the same dialect and possessed of the same vigorous independence of outlook as those forefathers of his whom Wordsworth encountered.

In the Border country you will still encounter everywhere an unchanging pride of family and place, and everywhere in Yorkshire you will meet with a rich, salty humour whether from the isolated farmers or the anything-but-isolated millhands.

These northerners have had a grim fight with Nature in a frequently harsh mood. They have had to fight, too, for industrial freedom, and the result is a magnificent sense of independence. They are instinctively generous-hearted and almost embarrass the stranger by the warmth of their welcome and degree of hospitality.

The age of machines has done nothing to dim the rich loveliness of the ballad spirit. The proximity of the mountains has maintained man's inherent dignity. Under a rugged and sometimes seemingly harsh exterior, which is no more than a mask to hide his shyness, you will find always a mind as sensitive to beauty as that of the great masters.

You may, on a first visit, feel under a grey mist of rain that the beauty is not startling, but even the rain that is frequent has its compensations. It is this dampness that gives the girl of the fells that exquisite blend of pink and white in the cheeks that defies all artifice, and it is this same



rain that gives the land that rich, soft green that you find nowhere else in the world.

It is, perhaps, enough that it also produced the sweetest singers about the loveliness of the changing seasons that the world has yet heard.

## MIDLAND PILGRIMAGE

ONE OF OUR POETS, MORE ACCUSTOMED TO THE SUNNY south, once dismissed the Midlands of England as "sodden and unkind".

Neither epithet is justified.

The heart of England is rightly Shakespeare's England, a land of exquisite, if subtle, charm, where man's handiwork blends with that of Nature to create landscapes of diverse and unexpected beauties at every turn. Now it is a tall, shining church spire rising among the poplars and elms. Now it is a cluster of warm brick cottages chequered with great beams of Tudor oak, lit up by colourful flower gardens. Now it is a whole village of greystone houses set on the bare sides of a wold of vivid green. One part of the Midlands, known as the "Shires" is all undulating, open grassland, with little wood coppices dotted about at discreet intervals, the paradise of the foxhunter.

Another part is a high plateau of limestone with little musically named streams, Windrush and Evenlode, coursing along tiny valleys by way of hamlets whose stone houses have no peer the world over for architectural beauty. Their roofs are of stone, pearl-grey as the feathers of a dove ; their yellow walls are mellowed as if the sunlight of centuries had seeped into them with the rain.

This is the land of highly ornate Perpendicular churches, built at the charges of the wealthy wool merchants who lived

in stone manor houses with delicately shaped chimneys, carved porches and capitals, and stone-mullioned windows, standing in great wooded parks.

Shakespeare knew and loved this land, but he was not the first Midlander to be stirred to verse by its beauty.

As early as 1330 there was born in the Wyre Forest of Shropshire, William Langland, whose poem *The Vision of Piers Plowman* is a document of first-rate sociological importance as showing the beginning of the fight for political freedom. The ploughman pleads for parliamentary rule for the common weal, attacks the vices of the Church and State. Even at this early age the feel for natural beauty is already implicit as we see in the description of that May morning on the Malvern Hills, where the poet dreamed his vision, a vigorous and robust picture of the colourful mediaeval motley—all of whom show a passionate love of personal liberty and independence.

From the high, razor-edge of these Malvern Hills, where the ploughman slept, we look out westward to the black mountains of Wales and across the wooded valley of the shining Severn to Bredon Hill, the scene of the sad but sweet songs of A. E. Housman, the "Shropshire Lad", whose lyrics are as crystal clear as the lark's song :

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

And there are few lovelier sights in all England than this snow-white vale of Evesham in cherry- and apple-blossom time seen from Bredon.

In this land of cider orchards and plenty was born England's present poet laureate, John Masefield, who sings of :

Tewkesbury inns and Malvern roofs, and Worcester chimney-smoke.

The apple trees in the orchard, the cattle in the byre,  
And all the land from Ludlow town to Bredon church's spire.

Born in the West Midlands, Masfield now lives at the south-east corner of the Cotswolds in Oxford, the home of the scholar-gipsy, whose wanderings inspired Matthew Arnold's picture of the stripling Thames at Bablock-hythe, the maidens dancing round the Fyfield elm in May, hay-time above Godstow Bridge, "Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames", and all the quiet beauties of the gentle Midland scene. Arnold was always at pains to contrast the serenity of the Midland scene with the unrest in *men's minds*.

Shakespeare spent his boyhood and youth in the other corner of the Cotswold, the north-west, on the banks of the winding poplar-fringed Avon, under the greenwood trees of the Forest of Arden, in the deer parks of the great landowners.

Visitors often express surprise at the loveliness both of Stratford-upon-Avon and the villages and country immediately surrounding it, but surely it is not very surprising, if environment counts for anything, to find that the sweetest singer of them all should have spent his impressionable years in this fairyland.

The fact that he gives his characters Greek or Roman names and lays his scenes in Bohemia deceives nobody.

The men and women who spring to life again out of his plays are men and women of Warwickshire, and the banks whereon the wild thyme grows are not in Thessaly but at Shottery.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is as Midland in setting as Bottom is Midland in his blend of obstinacy and credulity.

The forest to which the lovers are banished in *As You Like It* is within a walk of Shakespeare's birthplace.

And the effect of the beauty of his home on Shakespeare went deeper than his plays. It caused him to retire in the heyday of his powers to enjoy his last days where he had enjoyed his first.

So a visit to the Midlands with Stratford-upon-Avon as your centre may well supply you with the secret of the English character as it will certainly supply you with the English scene at its most varied and most characteristic.

In the first place it is old. In spite of the proximity of the great industrial centres of Birmingham and Coventry, Stratford has managed to preserve both its mediaeval appearance and its mediaeval character.

Choose market-day for your visit and listen to the conversation of the farmers and you will be surprised to find how close it runs in subject and manner to that of Mr. Justice Shallow and Silence.

Shakespeare might well be surprised if he were able to return and see the theatre that is now his memorial, but he would instantly recognize the long, low bridge of Sir Hugh Clopton by which he so often crossed the Avon, the school from which he played truant, the thatched, timbered cottage where he wooed and won Anne Hathaway, and most of all the Cotswold uplands where he went hawking and the low-lying enclosures where he chased the deer. It is rather as if Time had decided to stay his hand and keep this little corner of England perpetually Elizabethan. The great houses of the Cloptons and Lucys have altered scarcely at all in 350 years. Indeed, the tall chimneys, many gables, mullioned windows and twin cupolas of Charlecote make it one of the show houses of England.

Shakespeare's villages, Piping Peabworth, Dancing

Marston, Haunted Hillborough, Hungry Grafton, Dodging Exhall, Papist Wixford, Beggarly Broom, and Drunken Bidford, may no longer deserve their Tudor epithets, but in outward appearance they all wear the same quiet contented look of sixteenth-century Warwickshire.

The Avon, no longer navigable by barge, as it was three centuries ago, has sunk back into its mediaeval quietude, which makes it all the more effective as a view-point from which to look on red-roofed Stratford as a whole. Washington Irving's phrase "soft-flowing" exactly suits it, and the wise visitor will let the willow- and poplar-fringed stream take him at its own sweet will up past the rich meadows of Charlecote towards the noble castle of Warwick, or downwards past even more sequestered hamlets of thatch, timber, and plaster towards the orchards of fruit-growing Evesham.

The actual centre of England, if so curiously shaped an island can be said to have a centre, lies just over the hills to the east, close to that astonishing Roman road, the Fosse Way, which cuts a direct line from north-east to south-west. The place is marked by a circular windmill on a knoll called Chesterton, whence you get yet another impression of Middle England, an undulating greenland with fewer trees, little hedged fields and a series of bare green knolls, many of them crowned with windmills and churches.

But the cream of the Stratford country lies to the south of it, up the gentle slopes that lead to the stone-wall country of the Cotswolds, where four counties meet. Here you suffer from a real embarrassment of riches, for nowhere else in England do you find such a long sequence of villages where the harmony of the architectural line and colour blends so perfectly with the line and colour of the country.

There can never be agreement where all is enchantment which of these scores of upland villages is the loveliest, but

when you have seen Westwell, Upper and Lower Swell, Upper and Lower Slaughter, Eastleach St. Martin and Eastleach Turville, each with its crystal-clear stream running down the village street below the brilliantly coloured flower gardens that set off the symphony in greys and greens of the roofs and lawns and the rich gold of the lichen covered barns, I think you will agree that no villages elsewhere so perfectly epitomize what all men in their hearts most of all desire—beauty in quietude.

It is here, most of all, that you feel how much of Shakespeare's sweetness of disposition and all-embracing gentleness sprang from his environment. He sucked up all the honey of this countryside.

You cannot, however, count your Midland pilgrimage complete until you have visited that other limestone district on the northern side of Shakespeare's house that has been long known as the Switzerland of England. Derbyshire, no less than its neighbour Warwickshire, has scenic loveliness which has inspired panegyrics from poets and prose writers of all ages. It inspired Handel to compose the "Messiah", George Eliot to write *Adam Bede*, and Izaak Walton to write the *Compleat Angler*.

The cream of it lies in a remote, very narrow ravine called Dovedale, which is one of the gems of English scenery, a Grand Canyon in miniature. Through the bottom of the ravine runs that narrow troutstream, the Dove, known to the poet Cotton as "the princess of rivers", fringed like all the other Midland streams with iris, willow-herb, meadow-sweet, yellow musk and butterdocks.

Shining limestone rocks shaped by time and the elements into the forms of lions and apostles rise a thousand feet perpendicularly, with silver birches, beech trees, and oaks growing out of the very rock sides which sometimes lean so

close together that you could imagine a giant striding across. And, indeed, when you are on the rather bleak tops you do not suspect the presence of the thousand-foot ravine until you are actually peering over the edge.

This land, like the Cotswolds, has staunch stone decorated manor houses, ancient standing stones and long grass barrows in which prehistoric man was buried, and ancient veins of lead once mined by the Romans, but it is greyer, more primitive and wilder, and lacks the gentleness that makes Warwickshire so extraordinarily illustrative of Shakespeare's genius .

The Midlands of Dovedale bear more affinity with the north and the Midlands of the Cotswold has more affinity with the west, with its soft, warm winds "full of birds' cries".

And it is significant that the birds of the North Midlands were once the eagle and are now the plover, while the birds of Stratford are the swan on the Avon and philomel in the brake.

So, as I said, in your Midland pilgrimage you will savour every type of English scenery, as in Shakespeare you will encounter every type of Englishman.

Which is, after all, only logical, for the heart should show the man.



## I GO BACK TO DERBY - 1745

## (i)

IT IS FUNNY YOU ASKING ME WHETHER I REMEMBER DERBY in the '45. I can see it all as clear as if it were yesterday.

I must have been eleven—no, twelve—at the time. I was at the grammar-school, and I was one of those who rang the bells and helped to collect stuff for one of the bon-fires to greet the Prince as he came in.

It had been a restless sort of term. I remember one day—it must have been soon after term began ; anyway, in September—that I looked in at the "George" in the Ashbourne Road to see Uncle Joby (you remember Job Spendlove ?) and there was a man came in with dust all over his cloak and his horse in a sweat. He wanted a new shoe put on the off hind foot of his mare, and he seemed in a terrible hurry.

And Uncle Joby's one of those that can't ever be hurried. Proper Derbyshire Uncle Joby was ; "strong i' th' arm and proper thick i' th' yed", as they say.

"By goom, measter," I remember him saying, "it be loocky thing for thee as thee isna a Papist."

"And how so ?" said the stranger, looking up quickly.

"Well, thou mun' 'a yeard o' t'new law."

"No, I haven't What is it ?"

"Well, if thou'rt a Papist thou munna ride a nag worth more nor five pound ; and what's more, thou munna go traipsing more than five mile from thee whoam. And—he, he !—a'll bet a guinea thou'st ridden yon nag a sight nearer fifty mile nor five." He lifted up the horse's hooves.

"Eh ! An' a'll tell thee anoother thing. T'last time this mare wer shod wur in Coomberland."

That riled the stranger a whole heap. "Don't talk nonsense," he said ; "I've never been in Cumberland in my life. I've just come in from—from Wirksworth."

Old Joby winked at me. "Well, t'Wirksworth smith mun 'a learned 'is shoein' i' Coomberland. It's a different sort of shoe altogether from what we shoe 'em wi' i' Durby. It's thicker and narrower."

I remember that so well because it was the same day, just before I got home—my father kept the "Black Lion" in the Moorledge—that I saw a crowd reading a notice that was stuck up outside the "George". It was signed by the Duke of Devonshire, and it was all about calling a meeting at the "George" "to consider"—I copied it down and I've still got the copy; here it is—"to consider such measures as are fit to be taken for the support of the royal person and government of His Majesty King George and our happy constitution in church and state, at a time when rebellion is carrying on in favour of a Popish Pretender".

Well, it's all right my telling you now, because it was all of sixty—no, seventy—years ago, and him an old man, and nobody can hang for what I say, but I remember that night hearing some of the folks discussing that notice. There was Tom Barber. "Happy, by goom !" he said. "Donna any on ye mind the riots when King George came to t'throne ? 'To 'ell with knaves', we said." There was old George Palfreyman, who cackled at that and said : "Ay. Well do

I mind it. There were yeds brokken and all when George was proclaimed. It's all my eye calling ours a 'appy constitution," he said. "I'm non so sure as we're so well off under these German foreigners, after all. All these taxes, and all this discontent, and wars all over t'place. If it werena for t'fact as they're Catholics, damme if I wouldna rather see t'Stooaarts back again." "And, anyway," said old Eli Batterly from a fire corner, "it's theirs by rights." "Ay, by goom, that's true too," said Tom.

At all events, there was a grand dinner given by the Duke, and money was collected to raise two companies of volunteers to protect us against these rebels. "Derbyshire Blues", they were to be called. A month later they had another meeting at the "Talbot"—all the grand lords of the county—and, my goodness, did they drink!

All these meetings got everybody very excited, and some people terribly frightened, my mother among them. Whenever I was forgetting this and that, or got dirty, she'd say: "Them wild Scots'll be here soon and cat thee alive." Of course I'd never seen a Scotsman, but from all I'd heard they were devils.

And we never knew when they might pounce on us. Every time my mother saw me off to school she used to kiss me as if she were sure she would never see me alive again.

There were heaps of wild rumours going round all the time, but our teacher told us that there were special messengers sent every day to the Duke to give him the latest news, and this was handed on to the Mayor, who posted it so that everybody should know the truth and not get in a panic.

Well, from these notices we knew that the Prince really had landed in Scotland, that he really had won a great victory at Preston Pans, that he had crossed the Border into England, and that he was marching on London pretty fast.

The Duke of Cumberland had gone out to meet him, but according to the report the Prince had given him the slip and got between him and London.

(ii)

The real excitement began on the Tuesday. That was the 3rd of December. I remember we had a special holiday to go out to see the review by the Duke of Devonshire of his troop of six hundred "Derbyshire Blues". And everybody was in the highest spirits because the rumour had gone round that Cumberland had found out where the Prince was, and was going to give him battle the next day.

I remember Eli Hursthouse and I secretly decided that we'd cut school and trip off and see it. But you know how it is. Soon Eli said, "What about if they catch us five miles from home and say we're Papists? We shanna be able to prove we anna." And so we never went.

It was just as well, for about four o'clock in the afternoon, when we should have been well on our way somebody came rushing into the market-place shouting: "They're in Ashbourne, they're in Ashbourne!" So the soldiers immediately received orders to march out of town. You never saw such a scene.

I saw one old man digging away madly in his garden making a huge hole, and his wife and the servants tipping gold coins, silver candlesticks, rings, jewellery, all sorts of valuables, into one of those old oak chests that you see in churches, and burying it.

But most people were in too much of a hurry to hide anything. They were just going while they could; on horseback with wives riding pillion; whole families in

wagons, taking bedding, tables, and chairs, as if they were flitting. They were much too frightened to care what they looked like.

About half past four I got tired of watching the long procession. I went home and asked when we were going. Dad just laughed and said, "What, a poob-keeper go? It's t'chance of a lifetime. I hope to have every room filled tonight for t'first time for years. Innkeepers donna take sides in a war. They serve anyone so long as they've got t'brass and nobb'dy when t'brass fails."

So I went back to the market-place, where the "Derbyshire Blues" were standing under arms and crowds gaping at them, partly in admiration because of the battle they were going out to win for us, and partly in fear lest any of their sons and sweethearts should be going to their deaths.

The soldiers themselves were swinging their arms, trying to keep warm. The usual Derby December mist had come up from the Derwent with the dusk, and after a lot of talk the Blues, looking very blue, were dismissed to their quarters to get refreshments and warm themselves.

About seven o'clock another company, under Captain Lowe of Hazlewood, marched into the town, and at ten o'clock the drums beat to arms, and I stood there shivering with cold but wildly excited as I saw the Duke of Devonshire at the head of his Blues march out by torchlight.

But what surprised us all was that they did not march out towards Ashbourne to keep the Prince at bay; they marched off towards Nottingham, leaving us in Derby completely defenceless.

It was a queer night. I couldn't sleep a wink. I kept on hearing shouts and the rumble of the wagon wheels of more families flitting from the homes that at any moment might be plundered.

I was in a pretty state, expecting to be murdered in my bed by the ferocious Scots, and it didn't make matters any better for me hearing all the night through the noises and curses of those who were tumbling about below in the foggy darkness. I heard my mother talking to my father a lot, but I think he was asleep. He often was when she had anything to say.

At breakfast she was fussing more than ever, and I remember in the end my father shut her finally by saying :

"Our Sarah Ellen, canna tha get it into thi thick yed that soldiers on t'march is 'oongry ? They donna waste time killing and sooch like when they can get food. 'That's killin' t'goose as lays t'goolden eggs—and if there's wan thing abooove anoother as I've yeard about t'Scots it is that they're what they ca' canny. Now, lass, donna fret thysen. We're goin' to coom out o' top o' this yet. Tak' brass from both sides, that's our policy. Thou'lt see as I'm reight i' th' end, mark my words."

The thing that worried me most of all was the quietness. The Blues had gone. Houses were deserted, and everything was at sixes and sevens. I never thought of going to school till my father fetched me a clout over the head.

"Allus t'same," he said. "Any excuse. Thou'lt go to schule same as usual. And them as is absent—well, thou'll get their marks and 'appen t' prize, after all. Wan man's loss is t'ooother man's opportunity." So off to school I had to go.

There were only three of us left in my class, and the master kept looking out of the window and listening, the same as the rest of us.

Then—it must have been about eleven o'clock—I shot up in my seat. I saw two strangers coming down the road outside, and as they were coming there was young Mr. Stanford

on his horse going up the road—and I could hear them having words—and then I saw him get off his horse, and one of the strangers got on it and turned Mr. Stanford back.

“They’re here !” I shouted. “They’re here !”

“Well, two’s not an army,” said the master.

“Can we go and follow them, sir ?” I asked.

I didn’t wait for an answer ; they went riding on up to the “George”, and I was close behind them.

(iii)

One asked for the magistrates and loudly shouted that he wanted billets for nine thousand men. Nine thousand ! I thought of my father at once. But he was already there. He’d have taken the whole nine thousand if he could.

Then I saw, coming through the white mist, about thirty men, all in grand uniforms—blue they were, with red facings, and scarlet waistcoats with gold lace—not a bit the sort of ferocious heathen I’d expected to see. Fine-looking, thin, upstanding giants. They were quite quiet. They sat on their horses formed up in the market-place, while all the people who had first run away, now that they found that they weren’t going to be shot, came creeping back and gaping, and even tried a word or two on them to see if they spoke English. Most of them didn’t.

And it was then that I heard someone say, “Why not ring t’church bells ?” “Why not light a bonfire ?” “Let’s show ’em we wish ’em no harm”.

So I went rushing off to ring the bells of St. Alkmund’s, but after a bit I was afraid of missing something, so I came back and began picking up some of the furniture that

had been left behind in the gardens and pulling it to the market-place, where we lit a bonfire. We needed it. It was a perishing cold day.

It was about four hours later—no one ever thought of dinner—about three o'clock, that an even grander lot of chiefs came riding in with the Life Guards, and Lord Elcho, they said it was, leading them. I counted them as they passed me ; there must have been a hundred and fifty. They looked so cheerful and gay that you'd never have guessed they'd marched all the way from Scotland. The war was as good as over. Even as a kid I could see victory written all over their faces.

We began to cheer. From somewhere unknown white cockades appeared ; we fairly scrambled for them. I've got mine still. And when, a bit later on, the whole of the army came swinging along, six or eight abreast, waving their standards of white flags with a red cross, I felt I wanted to fight for them, and so did most of the other boys with me. I never felt afraid of them at all. Then came a most extraordinary screeching noise, and some fellows came swinging along with great blown-out pigs' bladders and puffed-out cheeks, blowing and twiddling their fingers up and down a pipe. It didn't make a tune, but it roused me even more than the beating of drums, and I found myself waving and cheering.

There seemed to be no end to the column. They all held their heads high and looked as if nothing could turn them back. There were some boys among them no older than myself. Some of these men looked pretty footsore and ragged, but they weren't letting that bother them. A decent meal and a few clothes would soon set them up again.

They went on filling up the market-place until it was almost dark. Then I heard the town crier saying something



about the Prince, and the magistrates all came filing out in their gowns, and there was a great hush.

I looked for someone in armour on a white charger, but when he did come the Prince came on foot. I thought he looked wonderful. He was a grand figure of a man, tall and straight and slender, and he had on a green bonnet laced with gold, a white bob-wig, a sort of check-coloured shawl swung over his right shoulder, and a broad sword at his side. He looked the kind of man to make people follow him.

I fairly cheered. I cheered so loud that he looked aside at me and smiled at me. I swear he did. I ran alongside him till he came to Lord Exeter's house down in Full Street, and then they put a guard all round the house. People kept on coming and going through the doors ; and I stayed watching them.

Then Sam Hursthouse, who was with me, got fidgety and said, "What about the others ?"

"Let's go and look," I replied.

And we saw carriages driving up with all the dukes and lords till after ten o'clock at night. It was quite light with the bonfires and illuminations. There was the Duke of Atholl, I remember, at Mr. Gisborne's, the Duke of Perth at Mr. Rivett's, Lord Pittligo at Mr. Meynell's, and Lord George Murray at Mr. Heathcote's.

(iv)

Dad was in fine fettle when I got home. He'd got sixty-five men and twelve officers billeted on him, and didn't say a word about my not coming in to supper or anything, but he rated me for not being there to help earlier. I made up for it when I did get home, for I had to go round with the

bread and cheese and the beer for the men ; some of them were lying about in the lofts and the stables on straw, with their shoes off their feet ; others were swilling themselves under the pump in the yard.

The gentry were in our best rooms, and for them Mum had cooked a great sirloin and Bakewell pudding, and they had all our best glasses and plates with the Devonshire crest on it of the stag within the pale.

I was being sent all over the place. We ran out of cheese, and I had to go over to neighbour Ludlam's for some, and I found that he'd flitted, but he'd left his cheeses where they always were, so I lifted the lot, though I was afraid somebody might catch me and hale me up before the Prince for stealing. But I got back all right, and then I answered a call of "Boy ! Boy !" from one of the gentry's rooms, and there was a group of Highland gentlemen all on their feet toasting "James and London", and crying out for more wine. And when I brought it they filled a glass for me and they stood me on the table, and I too shouted "James and London !"

In spite of having had nothing to eat myself and being run off my feet, I found that I was loving it all. I began to wish there was an invasion of this sort every week. It was a grand change after the ordinary round of going to and from school.

I slept sound enough that night. There was no longer any question of being murdered in our beds. What fools the others had been to run away !

(v)

I had expected to see the Scots army parade early and march on again on London, knowing how quickly they

had come so far, and those were the orders if the pipes played. The fact that they didn't play should have assured me that something had gone wrong. Anyway, there was no marshalling of troops ; they were to have the day off.

The town crier was walking about with copies of the Royal Proclamation, and there was a grand story going round that anybody who had subscribed to the Derbyshire Blues, who had vanished into the blue, should subscribe a similar amount to the Prince's army.

They demanded £100 from the post-office, but as they could only raise £20 they took the post-chaise instead. They went round trying to enrol recruits, and they took all the arms and horses they could find, but I saw none of that stealing of jewellery and clocks and money that people who weren't there said they indulged in.

The only thing I did notice was a sort of fidgetiness. "Why don't we push on ?" they were saying.

Well, the reason for that was that they were holding meetings with the Prince in Lord Exeter's house all day.

As you may imagine, as soon as I'd done my jobs about the house, taking round the beer and bread and cheese for the soldiers in the loft and waiting on the gentry in the parlours, I dashed off back to Lord Exeter's house to find out the news and see if I could see the Prince again. There were messengers coming and going through that door like bees at a hive, but those pipes never sounded. The men were never summoned, and the only thing I saw was the Army orders that one Highlander showed me.

"The parole is 'John and Bristol'," he said.

"But you are not going to Bristol," I said.

He laughed. "Nay, laddie," he said ; "we're marching on London. And we're right early."

The Highlanders weren't quite so excited that Thursday

night. They seemed to have cooled down, and some were a bit worried at having wasted a day.

"We had to wait for the Welsh," said one man.

"We need to wait for nobody. We're all right by ourselves," said a second.

"We've got few enough recruits in Derby," said a third.

"We'll get recruits enough after we've beaten Cumberland. Nobody joins an army till it's won something," said a fourth.

(vi)

Well, I was up early enough on the Friday morning to give them their last meal and I went out to the market-place to see them set out on their triumphal march on London.

The main body, led by the horse, started in the cold, dank early dawn an hour before sunrise. I ought to have known something was wrong, for the Prince was no longer in front on foot. He was mounted, and he came in the rear, looking entirely different. No smile on his face now. He didn't look so tall. He looked shrivelled up.

They didn't take the road to Loughborough. They took the road to Ashbourne, the way they had come. *They were in retreat!*

It just wasn't believable. Nothing had happened. There had been no battle. Derby was theirs, London lay open only a hundred or so miles on, and from all accounts London would as lief have a Stuart as a Hanoverian.

We wandered about dazed after they had gone. The original plan may have seemed mad, but this retreat was too daft to be believed. It must be, I thought, some plot to draw the Derbyshire Blues back into the town and then

pounce on them. So I ran along the road to Ashbourne to see where they halted. When I caught them up I found that most of them still thought that they were marching towards London, and I was not surprised.

When I got home again I expected to hear the church bells ringing and see more bonfires lit to celebrate our deliverance, but all everybody was asking was "Where are the Derbyshire Blues?" And all everybody was doing was collecting for himself as much as he could of the stuff that the Scots left behind. But anxious eyes were still kept on the Ashbourne road and ears open for the screech of pipes.

But the Scots never came back.

About forty-eight hours after they'd gone two Welsh messengers came in with promises of help for the Prince, but he'd gone too far. He never got the message.

It's easy to be wise after the event, but I've often thought that if the White Rose had marched over Swarkeston Bridge on that Friday morning the whole history of England would have been altered. I'm told that the real secret lay in the fact that the Prince mistook the Derby apathy for sympathy with Hanover. Actually we didn't care a doit for Hanover, but we do like to be on the winning side.

And, as usual, we were.

But it wasn't wise in Derby to confess that you were a member of the Derbyshire Blues for years and years.

Nathaniel Curzon's miners, in particular, never stopped nagging at them; but I don't know which was worse. The miners were all for the Prince and never lifted a finger to help him just at the moment that would have made all the difference. There's really not much to choose. We blew neither hot nor cold, so we kept our heads—but not much else.

I wish I'd followed the Prince.

## I GO FORWARD TO WOOLACOMBE—19—?

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MYSTERY TO ME WHY CHRISTMAS, which is always associated with joy and high spirits, should be interlinked in one's mind with ghosts, who are nearly always associated with sorrow and low spirits.

It can only mean that we have got ourselves all wrong about ghosts.

It was all very well in Shakespeare's time for ghosts always to come in "questionable" shape. They were good dramatic material that way and presumably frightened the "groundlings", just as they were good material that way for the ballad-mongers. We have all shuddered deliciously as we rolled over on our tongue Coleridge's hair-raising lines :

*Like one that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread.  
And having once turned round, walks on,  
And turns no more his head ;  
Because he knows a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.*

But those few of us who ever walk today in darkness or alone are not in the least afraid ; or, if afraid, certainly not of ghosts or the intangible. And my lack of fear is certainly due to my scepticism, not about the reality of ghosts but about their characteristics. To me they are neither funny nor fearful.

As Dr. Johnson said : "All argument is against ghosts, but all belief is for them." The ghosts are there all right. The trouble is that most people take them to be sinister,

and indeed, if they are restless through unhappiness, they may cause unrest, if not unhappiness, in the houses which they haunt.

But they are not all restless or unhappy. Times change even among spirits. There is far less clanking of chains along dank, hollow corridors than there used to be. In a word, ghosts are happier. The old-fashioned groaning ghost is already *démodé*.

As my few spirit visitations and experiences of the occult have been almost completely happy, I am the more inclined to believe that the happy fairies are displacing the unhappy ghost.

Have you been in the South of Ireland lately? If you have, you have undoubtedly taken part in the thrilling sport of watching for fairies in West Limerick. This new game may have started in rivalry to the watchers on Loch Ness, where bigness is a virtue. In Ireland the good little people are less than two feet tall. But they are less elusive than the water monster. People know how they dress. They have been heard to talk. They have been seen to leap to the height of a man. They have even been held by the hand.

I must say that I find these happy leprechauns infinitely more attractive than the drooping, silent, and rather wet grey ladies and heavy-treading giants in cumbersome armour who penetrate the walls and stalk up and down the staircases of deserted country houses.

I can foresee a very happy and original Christmas being spent by fairy-lovers dashing off to Limerick to join in the chase of high-stepping little people in the mountains.

I certainly would even forgo the delights of speeding down the snowy slopes from the Scheidegg if I could be sure of seeing a couple of fairies skipping or "lepping" the

ditches of Connemara or Mayo. What I like so much about the evidence of those who have seen these good people is their detailed exactitude.

The fairies dress in red. One of them wears a white cape. They affect knee-breeches. However much they leap over muddy country they remain neat and clean. They speak English, not Irish, which is very unexpected. They appear by day, which perhaps explains why we know so precisely what they look like. Their lack of ears might have passed unnoticed in a swift midnight flitting, and even in bright moonlight we should have missed the fact that their faces are hard and hairy like those of men.

I look forward eagerly to the day when they will show themselves again in England. They seemed to be common enough in Shakespeare's day.

One of my main grievances about ghosts is that so few of them are daylight ghosts. They obey only too rigidly the rule about disappearing at cock-crow. But it so happens that the only two recent experiences I have had of other-world visitants have both taken place in broad daylight.

The first occurred in the island of Lewis. I was on a lonely rough cart-track on the western seaboard between Breidhnis and Mealastadh, looking out to sea in the hope of seeing St. Kilda, when suddenly I heard a strange music, low, sweet, and very tuneful, coming either from a harp or from bells. There was a shaggy black calf not far away, and a few sheep were scattered about among the grey boulders and rough grass. A light green sea was breaking over the rocks below.

I ran immediately in the direction from which the music was coming, and instantly it stopped. I ran everywhere, searching for the unseen musician. There was no one.



Some months afterwards I told the story to my friend, Dr. Thomas Wood, who crossed the room to his piano and played a short series of notes.

"Was that what you heard?" he asked.

"Exactly," I said rather breathlessly.

"That's what I heard once on Dartmoor," was his reply; "but with me it lasted twenty minutes."

"With me," I said, "less than twenty seconds."

He is far more sensitive than I am to spirit influences, for he lives in a completely happy house where he hears the voices of a man and a woman. They talk together quietly, pleasantly, and happily, always on the other side of the wall, at intervals of about six months. As he is convinced that they are Elizabethans, his main interest is to discover how the manner of speaking has altered, but no single word as yet has come through distinctly. It is like listening to the conversation of people in the next carriage in a moving train.

I should like to see a book compiled entirely of stories about happy ghosts. There must be plenty about.

"I long to talk with some old lover's ghost," sang John Donne; and surely happy lovers must haunt the scenes of their happiness as often as frustrated lovers haunt the scenes of their unhappiness. But if they do, they do not choose to make their presence known to me.

The only ghost that I have ever actually seen was a daylight ghost.

It was that of the white lady of Scaton Delaval, the huge, deserted Northumbrian home of Lord Hastings. She stands in a white coif at the window of a second-floor bedroom with outstretched arms, looking, according to one story, for the return of her lord; according to another,

gazing helplessly out for the return of the family, to whom she has to confess the dread news that she has betrayed her trust and allowed the child left in her care to burn to death.

By way of explanation of this strange apparition, it has been said that when the sun is setting its last rays strike through one of the windows on to a broken mirror that is not unlike a woman in shape, and the reflection seen on another window accounts for the ghost.

There is a natural explanation for a number of seemingly unnatural phenomena, but in this instance it is worth noting that I saw the figure at noon in the rain and that there is no longer a broken mirror in the room.

What I am wondering is where the helpless white lady will undergo her penance when Seaton Delaval crumbles away. Dr. Wood's happy pair apparently wander to and fro in the house as it was in Tudor days, not as it is now, after many reconstructions. Will the Lady of Seaton Delaval remain high in the air with no visible support when there is no longer any house there? Perhaps her shadow will grow less as time passes to heal her sorrow.

It may well be that ghosts only make their presence felt in proportion to the depth of their feeling, and that only the very happy or the very tragic have the strength of feeling to fight their way back to our consciousness. I find it extremely difficult to believe that ghosts have the slightest desire to frighten us. If they consider us at all (and if they're very old, I see no reason why they should) they are far more likely to be soliciting our help or pity or seeking for our companionship. They might even be anxious for us to share their happiness, but, as true happiness is usually a very quiet and private thing, it is more likely that we are

just being privileged to share the diffusion of joy that emanates involuntarily from all happy beings.

All the world, we are told, loves a lover or a pair of lovers, and I see no reason why we should not continue to love them or be pleased to see or hear them when they become ghostly lovers.

I certainly propose to haunt after death the places where I have been most happy—Woolacombe Sands, for instance—in the company of those whom I have most loved, and I shall feel very hurt if you or your descendants turn and run at our approach through fright, for we have been pleasant and lovely in our lives and in our deaths, and after we do not propose to be divided. Our laughter may be indistinguishable from the wind but it will still be rich and comforting, our talk will be no more than soft murmurings of contentment, and our passing even lighter than it now is when we run barefoot or canter bareback.

There has been too much of the solitary sad ghost, limping past, carrying his head tucked underneath his arm. I propose to institute a new era of ghosts who are merry and companionable and enjoy revisiting their glimpses of the moonlit and also the sunlit earth. I want my ghost to come out in the sun, which I so much love in life, and play.

However long I live there are certain people and certain places of whom and which I should never tire, and it therefore seems only logical to me, if I have strength of faith enough, that I shall share with the people I love the places I love.

If I do I shall certainly make a sufficiently happy impression upon them to make my presence felt both by the players in the sun and the riders in the surf of those, I hope, still far-off days.

